

THE IMPACT OF DRAMA THERAPY AS AN INCLUSIVE PRACTISE FOR PUPILS WITH LIMITED SOCIAL SKILLS

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By writing these lines I put a finishing personal touch on my Thesis. It has been a period of intense learning and trying for me, not only in the academic and scientific arena, but on a personal level. Thus, I would like to say a loud “thank you” to the people that helped me throughout this period.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate whether and in what ways through socio-dramatic play activities pupils with learning difficulties in their first years of primary school develop their self-esteem and gain a better understanding over their social competence skills.

Drama in Education (DiE) offers a holistic way of engagement in improvised roles and imaginative activities with the ultimate goal of enhancing the interpersonal social skills and self-confidence of each individual child through teamwork (Nagy, Laskey & Allison, 1993). Especially for populations with Specific Learning Difficulties (LD), DiE can provide an alternate, personalized way to deal with their negative emotional and self-referential issues and provide relief of the psychological tension they might experience due to i.e. social ostracism; finally, being a group activity, DiE can greatly impact the reinforcement process of the bonds between the individual and the rest of the team, reflecting a generalization between him/her and the society as a whole.

The above statement is especially true in the case of Primary-age pupils (particularly up to the age of 12 for the Greek context, in which this study took place) that are diagnosed with LD; failures in the early years of a pupil's academic life can modulate his/her Self-Esteem (SE) and Social Skills at a lower level than what is considered to be normal, and vice-versa, promoting i.e. introversion as a way to deal with unpleasant situations, avoiding comparison and confrontation with others. In view of the scarce research in the field of using DiE with primary-aged children with LD, this study proceeds to design a series of activities with this population, focused on positively enhancing their social skills and self-esteem.

Addressing this particular field of inquiry this researcher utilized the means of Qualitative Research. While self-esteem and social skills can be measured quantitatively, they are studied here as an expected direct result of Drama activities; as such they required extensive observation during data collection. To achieve this goal the researcher adopted an Ethnographic *Approach* through his role as participant observer, making

“thick descriptions” and interpretations of the findings; this allowed an in-depth understanding of social connections and emotions, through the participant observations and interviews.

The sample consisted of 34 pupils in the second grade of primary school (ages 7, minimum to 9, maximum) of which roughly 1/3 (11 in number) were under the spectrum of Learning Difficulties (2 with medical proof of being under the Autism spectrum and the rest suspected by their teachers to have at least one dominant form of learning difficulty –like ADHD- or at least social skill deficiencies). The number of the participants is larger than the number of the pupils with LD due to ethical reasons, so the later would not be targeted by their peers and/or ostracized, while also offering the perfect Inclusive environment for social interaction and team oriented achievements and involvement (Allport, 1954; Maras & Brown, 2000).

The results of the study reveal that:

- Both the drama activities and the increasing peer support and encouragement observed through these can enhance self-esteem in pupils with learning difficulties.
- The pupils developed their social skills as they began participating in the activities since they had to continuously adapt to each occasion that arose, failing and trying again from a new angle to achieve their goal in collaboration with their peers.
- Self-esteem and social skills seem to be linked, since the more self-competence the participants developed the more they tried to succeed as part of a team, and vice-versa.

The study ultimately reveals that Learning Difficulties can be addressed in a holistic way through Drama in Education with positive results for the pupil’s psyche, emotional and social status, having as a baseline the pupil’s self-esteem and social skill status through the eyes of the teacher prior and during the programme and the researcher’s personal observations. The use of drama is useful to teachers and researchers-practitioners

since it provides them with a direct way to access and address the problem or difficulty a child might be facing through the natural process of “playing”. Further research on the observable benefits of DiE that this research evidences, could possibly offer it a stable place in Greece’s educational curriculum and in the classroom.

Terminology

A number of terms that have been already mentioned might have different meaning in various contexts, i.e. between their social and medically accepted models. To avoid confusion and to offer a deeper understanding of how this researcher perceives and utilised these terms for and throughout the current study, the following glossary of terms is provided:

- *Drama in Education* (DiE): As the name suggests, it is the medium between Drama/Theatre and Education, targeting the evolution of interpersonal social skills while also engulfing inner personal development towards an enhancement of self-confidence and self-esteem (Andersen, 2010; Nagy, Laskey & Allison, 1993).
- *Inclusive Education* (IE): It is the commitment to educate each child, with or without a LD, and essentially constitutes an attempt to strengthen the bonds of the school-classroom community (Allport, 1954; Artiles et al. 2006; Maras & Brown, 2000; Nowicki, 2003).
- *Self-Esteem* (SE): It is the outcome of the self-verification process that a human being faces many times during his lifetime, directly resulting towards who that person really *is* and who he/she would *like to be*, through personal and group oriented achievements (Laurence, 1988; Marsh, 2005; Mecca, Smelser & Vasconcellos, 1989; Rosenberg, 1965).
- *Social Skills* (Soc.Sk.): The techniques and actions through which social perception is manifested, greatly needed by a person to complete a task within the social norm. Deficits on these skills can lead to problematic social behaviour and, thus, partially damage the social image of the individual, leading to a

possible diminishing of his/her self-esteem, a fact that can easily lead towards manifestations of various psychological problems (Canino, Costello & Angold, 1999; Cavell, 1990; Gambrill & Ritchey, 1986; Gresham, 1981; Gresham, 1983 in Gresham & MacMillan 1997; Gresham & Elliot, 1989; McFall, 1982; Nangle et al., 2010).

- *Learning Difficulties* (LD): As a term they refer to a variety of difficulties closely attached to academic performance, rendering a disorder in one or more basic psychological processes, from the visual or auditory to the motor and language processing ones; they are linked to low levels of self-esteem, social isolation and anxiety (Bryan, 1991; Johnson & Blalock, 1987; Lyon, 1996; Vaughn & Hogan, 1994). In short, LD is everything that inhibits a child's ability to learn; either inherent or ephemeral, dysgraphia or dyslexia, family problems or bullying at school the outcome is the same: inhibition of the education process.

Introduction

Rationale of the Study

There is an old saying: “A Man has three faces. The first face, he shows to the world. The second face, he shows to his close friends, and his family. The third face, he never shows to anyone. That face is the truest reflection of who he really is.” In our daily lives we perform roles without even realizing it; a female research scientist called, i.e., Anne wears simultaneously the cape of Anne, as the person that her family, friends and close work circle knows and the mask of the researcher and scientist, who tries to perform her best at her work and share her accomplishments while helping society, always according to the core characteristics that she has as a person and that her work’s ethics dictate. Finally, she wears the mantle of womanhood, with all the positive and negative results that our history and cultural creation have endowed upon that role. In short, Life can be a Theatrical Stage and Theatre can be a part of Life.

Humans grow up by mimicking in the first years of their lives, a fact that has evolutionarily proven to be one of the best ways of learning about the world around us. Just take a look at a child and you will see that it tries to mimic everything that it finds to be interesting and everyone that it sees as a “hero figure/model” – i.e. a baby brother tries to mimic many behaviours and actions of the older brother. But apart from heroes and models, children tend to create situations of pure fantasy that actually come to life inside their heads. These games and activities (i.e “...the floor is lava!”) sharpen their skills and thought process while offering the chance to make new acquaintances (in playgrounds, parties etc.).

Considering these simple and everyday-life facts and examples, one can start wondering what Drama, Theatre and their training procedures can offer to formal education processes. As the medium between the above terms, Drama in Education targets the evolution of an individual’s interpersonal skills, while simultaneously expanding the horizon of the ways he/she deals with other people and situations (Nagy,

Laskey & Allison, 1993). The whole procedure takes place within a group environment, to enhance team bonding and communication, while there is at least one observer to provide directions and solutions to problems – if and when needed. The final outcome of the process ultimately involves the enhancement of the individual's self-confidence and self-esteem, and a better understanding and respect of others' ways of thinking and their emotions, leading to a better use and handling of interpersonal social skills and situations.

The key, to this study, concepts of Self-Esteem and Social Skills, are of paramount importance for the evolution of the individual and his/her connections to the rest of society. Self-esteem is important because it is the outcome of the self-verification process that a human being faces many times during his lifetime. He/she has to decide on who he/she really is and who he/she would like to be, a process that takes place through personal and – more importantly – group oriented achievements. These group achievements are more important because humans are social beings; they verify themselves both in how they view themselves but also in how the rest of society sees them. To interact with society one needs social skills, the techniques and actions through which social perception is manifested, needed by a person to complete a task within the social norm (Cavell, 1990; Gambrill & Ritchey, 1986; Gresham, 1983 in Gresham & MacMillan, 1997; McFall, 1982). Any deficits of these skills can lead to problematic social behaviour and, thus, partially damage the social image of the individual, leading to a possible diminishing of his/her self-esteem, a fact that can constitute an individual particularly sensitive towards the development of psychological problems.

Learning Difficulties have a strong connection with a person's psychological state. As a term they refer to a variety of struggles closely attached to academic performance; they render a disorder in one or more basic psychological processes, including a broad spectrum from visual or auditory to motor and language processing ones (Lyon, 1996; Vaughn & Hogan, 1994 in Nowicki, 2003). About 5% of school pupils at some point experience some form of learning difficulty, or social skill deficiency (Bryan, 1991; Lyon,

1996) a fact that has proven to have long term effects in adulthood such as low self-esteem, social isolation and anxiety (Johnson & Blalock, 1987).

The study of such a population is particularly interesting in the light of activities involving Drama in formal education settings. It is well supported in the literature that through dramatic activities pupils can gain a better understanding over their emotional palette and enhance their critical thinking, as well as develop their interpersonal skills (Basourakos, 1998; Henry, 2000). These activities open the door to an imaginative world where anything can happen without negative consequences. In such a safe environment, as soon as his/her trust is gained, the individual is not afraid to act and react, gradually increasing his/her skill level through repetition (Bouchard, 2002). Eventually, through the development of prior skills or the gaining of new ones, the individual can start connecting patterns and behaviours acquired during the role-play activity with similar ones in real life, bridging a chasm that earlier was unbridgeable.

The academic literature in the individual research areas of Drama in Education, Self-Esteem and Social Skills and Learning Difficulties is far and wide, yet there is scarce research linking together these research areas. Some studies focus on one particular group of individuals, such as the ones under the Autism spectrum (Portman-Minne & Semrud-Clikeman, 2011), or ignore the concept of learning difficulties entirely (Freeman et al., 2003). In short, the majority of the studies in the field focus either on one of the above-mentioned terms or two at a time, trying to either create an in-depth intervention programme or proceeding towards making detailed observations and describing behaviours through these (i.e. Bakker et al., 2007; Elliot & Busse, 1991; Hallam, Ireson & Davies, 2004; Kavale & Moster, 2004; Merrell, 2001; Nowicki, 2003; Ross & Broh, 2000; Sharma, 2004; Spence, 2003). In the current study, merging these techniques and approaches was mandatory to achieve a deeper understanding of the situation.

This study aims to bridge this gap in the literature by conceptualizing ways in which the above fields can be merged in order to investigate and present whether through socio-dramatic play and activities pupils with learning difficulties (hereafter LD) develop their self-esteem and gain better and/or new social competence skills. The setting of the

study is a private school in Athens, Greece with participants being two mixed population classes (LD and non LD pupils, male and female).

Motivation of the Study

On a more personal level, the motivation for this study may best be understood through a short trip back to the researcher's school years. As a pupil, from the first year of primary school to the final year of high school, I was the "quiet" child, always paying attention to the teacher, always on good terms with my classmates and adopting the role of 'advisor' and 'sympathizer'. All that was for a reason: lack of self-esteem which would eventually lead towards a path of inwardness at a level that was not considered to be the "norm". Although I was aware of that fact, I decided not to act towards a positive and outgoing change, both because there was neither an obvious reason for me to do that nor a plain way to achieve it. Thus, I remained stable in this realization, while at the same time gathering around myself a group of friends with similar principals to mine; that is, up until I entered Drama school at the age of seventeen.

When I entered the Theatre Studies department, making my first contact with the world of Drama and Theatre, I had to participate in a variety of performances, holding roles both off stage and on stage. I fortunately had professors of Theatre who were willing and interested in evolving the self-esteem and skills of their pupils, during these theatrical productions. Gradually, all of my fellow pupils, including myself, were eventually able to get on-stage and perform, act, play, be heard loud and clear at the rear of the amphitheater, without the fear of failure or exposure to other people's judgment. It was then that I felt a great change in my life towards the positive that subsequently and most inevitably brought about the following question:

"If Theater and the dramatic procedures can help and evolve me in such a way, then why not help other people too through the same means?"

As the core reason and personal motivation behind the current research, besides my will and personal need to urge and constantly help people in need, this question drove

this study from its very beginnings – the formulation of its research questions – right till the writing up of its conclusion. It is based on the knowledge that different individuals require different approaches to teaching and learning; people's minds and hearts are built on the same principles and blueprints but they are completely different. Some just need different ways of learning about what is considered to be normal.

The current Thesis has evolved from this personal motivation towards a process of scientific inquiry that aims to explore the ways in which Drama in Education is able to assist in the development of the participating children's Self-Esteem and Social Skills. This scientific aim required both a systematic review of bibliographic and methodological research literature in the area in addition to the re-creation of the procedures that my university professors used and the mental and sensory situations that helped me overcome my fears and personal walls of isolation.

Outline of the Thesis

The Thesis is comprised of four chapters, excluding the introduction and the conclusion. Chapter 1 presents and explains the core theories and key definitions behind terms such as Self-Esteem, Learning Difficulties and so forth that the reader will encounter throughout this study. The researcher presents how all of these theories interlock with each other, producing the need for the conduct of the current study, while at the same time framing and supporting through theory and practice, its results.

Chapter 2 describes the Methodology and Methods of the study, the reasoning behind the key choices that fieldwork was based on. It explains the reasons that a qualitative approach was favored over a quantitative one, the particular benefits that the Case Study approach offered the study, the ethnographic elements that were deemed necessary for the collection of the data and so forth. The role of the researcher is particularly prominent in this section, as well as the tools and methods he used to collect and interpret the data.

The third chapter, the Analysis, presents the collected data relevant to this study's research questions and in accordance with the codes of data analysis. In the opening of the Chapter there is an extensive presentation of the coding system that this study was based on, including the Behaviours through which the final codes were observed and categorized. Following up, there is a presentation of the process of the analysis of the data, including an explanation of the interrelation between the seven Codes. The rest of the chapter consists of extensive descriptions and data presentation from each individual meeting.

In the final chapter, the Discussion, the researcher explores the ways in which Drama in Education can make a positive change in pupils with LD, low self-esteem and lacking social skills, drawing on both the presented data in Chapter 3 and on the theories and literature in Chapter 1. The chapter provides a critical window into whether and the extent to which this study's results are in par with the results of other, previous studies in the research areas identified. The interpretation of the findings will be the junction point between this researcher's observations and study's results with the scientific literature.

The Thesis concludes with an outline and summary of its key findings as well as a discussion of its limitations (methodological and others). A brief researcher's reflection will be presented, alongside some possible topics for further, future research in the field.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will review the literature relevant to the areas of Drama in Education, Inclusive Education, Self-Esteem, Social Skills and Learning Difficulties. In each particular section the key theories and definitions of the aforementioned terms will be presented and discussed individually and in relation with each other. As is evidenced during this chapter, all of the above terms seem to be part of the same circle of self-verification and self-efficacy, playing a very important role on both how the world perceives an individual and how the individual perceives the world.

The aim of this study is to investigate whether through the use of Drama in educational settings children develop their self-esteem and social skills; the target population of the study is mostly children with learning difficulties. The reason that Drama was chosen as a base and medium for a study on the development of self-esteem and social skills in populations with learning difficulties is that through Drama people embody with physical actions what is going on in their heart and mind (Schattner & Courtney, 1981). It is an activity that impels us to use, individually or in a group, physically and mentally, internally and within the surrounding environment our skills and potential, raising them to a new level. Individuals improve by gaining confidence while working in an indiscriminate environment (Way 1967). The main target is to create improvised dramatic activities designed to enhance social skill development and learning (Courtney, 1995; Freeman, Jendyk, 1981; Sullivan & Fulton, 2003).

Everything that drama offers to the children is core and very important for their development in their very first years at school. More specifically, from an educational point of view:

“Theatre in Education lets children to know themselves and the world and their relation to it. This is the only way that they can know who they are and accept responsibility for themselves”. (Bond, 1994, p. 36–39)

The child’s social environment, peers and adults, alongside the situations they create around the child play a core role in its self-esteem and its social skills development. Children in particular long for that feeling of belonging to a group; diminished feeling of safety within that group can have the possible negative development of introvert behaviours for the child, subsequently ignoring the social norms and people around it.

This seems to be particularly the case for children with learning difficulties. The low self-esteem of a dyslexic child, for example, could hinder its classroom oriented achievements, thus creating a loop of negative social/self-concept and self-esteem leading to repeated failures; even a few possible failures could lead to diminished self-esteem and idea of Self (Bruck, 1986; Humphrey, 2002). Similarly, in the case of their social skills, it could be supported that deficiencies of skills such as greeting and interacting with people in a proper manner, engaging in activities, knowing how and when to apologize could lead to negative behavioural social pattern such as isolation, and vice versa (Funderburk, Nye & Schwartz, 2009; Vaughn et al., 1992). Failure in class in any form during the first years of school is a very important issue for the children since their self-verification process is greatly affected at this age from the social activities, lessons, success and recognition for all these activities that they spend the biggest part of their daily life on (Faunce, 1984; White, 1986). That failure can create a vicious circle of self-efficacy and self-verification while it can also be created by the same rendered sources (i.e. learning difficulties, diminished self-esteem, deficit social skills) (Marsh, 2005).

As the object of investigation by a number of researchers (Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton, 2003; Funderburk, Nye & Schwartz, 2009; Kenneth, Kavale & Moster, 2004 and others), it could be supported that if one is to belong in a social circle, one needs to understand and –more importantly- to communicate with social cues that are commonly and widely used by that circle. In doing so, the individual needs the self-esteem and the social skills

to first exit from his or her comfort zone and, thereafter, to act and re-act towards other individuals. If the self-esteem and the social skills are underdeveloped for any reason, the individual needs to enhance their potency or even train to gain more (Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton, 2003; Kenneth, Kavale & Moster, 2004).

In sum, the current study aims to explore the effectiveness of using drama and its techniques to help pupils, in their third year of Primary school, enhance their socialization skills and their knowledge and understanding of Self.

1.1 Drama in Education (DiE)

1.1.1 Definitions

Nagy, Laskey and Allison (1993) define DiE as the medium between Theater and Education, taking advantage of everything the theatrical process offers, such as evolving interpersonal skills within a group, different ways of approaching characters and situations beyond ours or acting under an observer's objectifying gaze. Its aim is to empower the educational process towards its goals. By ignoring the final outcome of Theater, that of the live performance on stage during a play, drama in education focuses on developing personal awareness, bolstering sensitivity -both inwards and outwards- by training the participants to be able to understand their own and other people's emotions and reasoning, as well as enhancing their self-confidence.

A more academic-oriented definition is brought forward by Christopher Andersen (2010, p. 282): "...drama in education refers to the use of drama techniques to support learning in the classroom." The term is sometimes used instead of the terms developmental drama (Cook, 1917), creative dramatics (Ward, 1930), educational drama (Way, 1967), mantle of the expert (Bolton, 1985; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985), informal drama (Wagner, 1998), process drama (O'Neill, 1995), and framed expertise. Yet, the core of all the above definitions remains the same. Drama in education involves whole-class activities in improvised roles within imaginary situations (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, in

Andersen, 2010). Andersen (2010) further supports that the learner is both participant and observer, playing a role while at the same time interacting with others while in the role itself. The role of the classroom teacher seems particularly important here as he or she “builds on the actions and reactions of pupils to change or reframe the imagined context in order to create an episodic sequence of dramatic action” (p. 282).

It could be assumed, therefore, that DiE involves the whole class as a team, with the children in the leading-acting roles and the teacher upholding the role of director, giving directions, offering choices and making some of the decisions that will start or augment the procedure of fun through gaming, developing assets, learning through numerous improvisations and a wide range of imaginative situations (Belliveau, 2007).

1.1.2 Theories and Issues of DiE

The Arts have a decisive and positive outcome on the academic development of children and on their social handling skills, as has been supported by numerous studies (Basourakos, 1998; Belliveau, 2004; Bouchard, 2002; Catterall, 1998; Courtney, 1980; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Deasy, 2002; Edmiston, 2000; Eisner, 1998; Gallagher, 2001; Greene, 1995; Rose et al., 2000; Wagner, 1998; Winston, 1998). But arts, and especially drama in education, are frequently omitted from the curriculum or at least set in a minimum position of importance. This is most obviously the case in Greece, where pupils only take Art once or twice a week during primary school and will often be of secondary importance in relation to key academic subjects. In secondary school, Drama and Theatre are optional and can be selected amongst other subjects such as Astronomy, IT training and Drawing.

According to Miller (1988) though, if one omits the area of Arts from a curriculum one is essentially affecting and changing the mind of an individual which: “should never be limited by fragmented categories and priorities” (p. 118). He proposes three possible curriculum paths: Transmission, Transaction and Transformation. The latter of these three supports a holistic education, covering the pupils’ aesthetic, moral, physical and

spiritual needs. According to Miller, drama in education plays a very important part in a curriculum that follows the path of “Transformation”. The reason is that during a drama activity, the individual is free to switch between different characteristics, many different roles and viewpoints, eventually substituting the direct way of learning through hands-on experience and imaginative actions without consequences (Edmiston, 2000; Gallagher, 2001). Thus, the individual has the chance to explore a global, broader and free of alien influence viewpoint on the given subject, his own self and the world he lives in (O'Neill, 1995).

Through drama activities, it is suggested by Basourakos (1998) and Henry (2000) that younger pupils expand their emotional understanding palette and critical thought as well as their interpersonal social skills. With the activities being held within the borders of an imaginative world free of consequences, as mentioned above, the participants are not afraid to act and react, thus enhancing their abilities and skills through repetition and safe interaction (Bouchard, 2002; Humphrey, 2002). This creates and strengthens a strong line of understanding between dramatic activities and reality, recognizing problems, situations and connecting patterns and behaviours acquainted during the role-play process with what is encountered and needed in real life situations (Kuhn et al., 1995 in Andersen 2010; Needlands, 1990).

DiE offers the ability to engage the whole class in activities that promote social interaction and enhance children's self-esteem; it enables children to escape from negative emotions, thoughts and behaviours, through an imaginative setting full of possibilities of creation and one that is free of consequences. As research seems to show it promotes learning through mimicking and repetition, preparing the participants through role-play for the type of roles they will possibly need later, in real-life (Anderson & Dunn, 2013; Edmiston, 2014; Franks, 2014; Lazarus, 2012).

1.1.3 Situated Learning and DiE

Miller's stand on drama in education, as presented above, can be supported and analyzed through the work of Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989). They propose that education should be viewed under the umbrella of "situated learning". Simply put, situated learning is the moment we stop giving advice to a child on how to kick a ball and we let it actually perform the action in the field, alongside its teammates. Lave and Wenger (1991) define situated learning as a process of participation in a community framework of practice, increasing gradually in complexity and personal engagement. It is not just a process of gaining abstract knowledge; they address it as a feature of practice providing access to modes of behaviour that would not usually be available to the participants, gradually developing and enhancing their skills.

The importance of situated learning is not confined to science instruction, but applies equally well to the study of the arts, languages, social studies, mathematics and other curriculum areas (Andersen, 2004). DiE is a form of situated learning: the participants follow simple hints and advice given by the teacher, in order to promote the action and exchange of words between them, with Learning as the primary target.

Taking a closer look on the DiE/situated learning steps and analysis of Andersen (2004) it is possible to extract and form the following guidelines:

1. "Different motivation": The usual motive within a classroom is to acquire knowledge and use it properly to perform the best in assessment tests. But within the context of DiE, knowledge is acquired to actively solve problems, build explanations and satisfy the curiosity of the pupils.
2. "Grounding theoretical knowledge": Instead of just being taught generic theoretical knowledge, which is not certain that will be applicable to the real world, outside the classroom, the pupils gain this knowledge by themselves through its application, thus increasing the importance of both the action and the theoretical background.
3. "Habits of mind": Instead of just teaching pupils about habits of mind (dispositions and attitudes of a discipline, i.e. skepticism and evidence for scientific habits of

mind), through DiE they are able to use them inside their respective meaningful setting, repeating each attempt, until they become fluent in their use.

4. “Everyday contexts”: Pupils tend to distribute the knowledge they gain between school and out-of-school or “real life”. By placing the learning procedure within a setting similar to that in which it will be applied later, beyond the school environment, these two types of knowledge can be linked.
5. “Transferable skills”: From the moment this link is achieved for the pupil, it will allow for skills and abilities learned and enhanced within one context to be transferred and applied to another context.

At this point, it is essential to link DiE with some broadly recognized drama therapy models. Their clinical methodology and application follows closely the aforementioned steps, proving and enhancing their usefulness and functionality. Thus, firstly it is essential to mention Emunah’s (1994) five stages of drama therapy model:

1. “Dramatic Play”: Use of interactive games and exercises, cultivating playfulness, creativity and interpersonal trust.
2. “Scenework”: Improvisations, taking roles without the fear of being accused for one’s actions.
3. “Role Play”: Turning towards more real-life roles and situations, still experimenting with variables.
4. “Culminating Enactment”: Moving to deeper themes, by utilizing psychodramatic techniques.
5. “Dramatic Ritual”: Use of stories, music, sounds, movements to achieve assimilation of learning, transition to functioning outside the group and closure of the drama therapy experience.

Another drama therapy model that should be mentioned is Landy’s (1991) drama therapy role method. As a process of treatment it involves eight steps:

1. The Invocation of the Role.
2. The Naming of the Role.
3. The Playing out/ working through the Role.

4. Exploration of Sub-roles and alternative qualities.
5. Reflection upon the role-play: discovering role qualities, functions, and styles inherent in the Role.
6. Relating the fictional role to everyday life.
7. Integrating roles to create a functional role system.
8. Social modeling.

Both these therapy methods and the situated learning steps of DiE can be summarized in Landy's (1991) comment on the healing – as well educational- role that this theatrical oriented procedure can have:

“The healing potential of role is to be found as it positions the role-taker or role-player within the dramatic paradox of ‘me’ and ‘not-me’. The therapeutic actor, like the theatrical actor, is given permission to move in and out of two contiguous realities, that of the imagination, the source of unconscious imagery, and that of the everyday, the domain of grounded daily existence. While in this transitional space, one is capable of both viewing a problematic issue and working it through.” (Landy, 1991, p. 7)

Thus, since Drama and its procedures have been proven and accepted to be a valuable and strong ally for people who want to improve their Self and while these same techniques can be and have already being merged within the educational curriculum, this researches claims that DiE should be considered an important part of a curriculum and omitting it may lead to difficulties for pupils' personal development. With its exclusion from the curriculum, individuals are deprived of the ability to enhance their personal attributes and are guided down a much narrower path of knowledge and personal evolution.

1.1.4 DiE and Previous Research

The dramatic process, over the years, has given more than simple indications that it has the potential to enhance the social and emotional development of people under the umbrella-spectrum of special needs (Jindal-Snape & Vettraino, 2007). For example, Peter (2000a, 2000b) makes a link between participation and personal engagement within an imaginary setting with social and emotional development, through the means of dramatic activities, an idea that is also supported by Slade (1998) who considers drama as an effective way to lead to a long term learning experience for the participant. Couroucli-Robertson (2001), Hampshire (1996), Schnapp and Olsen (2003), all linked drama with therapeutic intervention, supporting that engaging in the process of drama activities involving physical, auditory and verbal elements enabled participants to gain confidence in their own personalized way.

This use of drama and its effect is being researched through many studies that focus on particular fields of the Special Needs spectrum. For example, Caplan's (2006) study addresses Drama as an effective approach and behavioural enhancement of children with Autism, alternative to the widely used Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI). In his study, he mentions that he has witnessed gains in cognitive, behavioural and language skills through IBI but not to the heights of social interaction and emotional expression that Drama as an approach offers. The role of Drama in relation to potential benefits for Autism is the focus of studies by Corbett et al (2011), Kempe and Tissot (2012), O' Leary (2013), Portman-Minne and Semrud-Clikeman (2011), and Rhoades (2012). These studies underline the potential of dramatic techniques on improving the socioemotional functioning and responses of children under the Autism spectrum. With regards socioemotional issues, other studies have looked at the effects of Drama on social, emotional and behavioural problems of children inside a school setting (Freeman et al, 2003) and social status and self-image (Bakker et al, 2007).

The review of this literature is useful to the current study in that although there might have been limitations that hindered the evolution of each intervention or research programme to its fullest potential, nevertheless, each one submitted valid enough

evidence to further substantiate its results and claims. The target group of each study might be different but the approach that is chosen is the same: the use of Drama and its techniques. This confirmed this researcher's belief that DiE can be a valuable ally on helping to solve the problems that people under the umbrella of Special Needs Education might face.

1.1.5 Curricula and drama, the place of Drama Education in primary school

It was supported that Drama in education offers a wide variety of positive outcomes for the participants while covering many of the possible present gaps in the school curriculum regarding children's personal/skill development. The current research supports that it can be one of the best ways for young children, during the first years of primary school, to improve and evolve their skills. Over the past decades, researchers and teachers share the belief that when children are involved in the drama process, some form of learning occurs. Normal (1981) supports that the core concept of DiE is about:

“...making personal meaning and sense of universal, abstract, social, moral, and ethical concepts through the concrete experience of the drama”. (p. 155 in Bolton, 1985)

Additionally, according to Bolton (1985) and Howell and Heap (2005) its primary use is confirmation in practice and through enactment of all the things that the pupils are orally taught how to achieve. Placing such knowledge under a new perspective it modifies, adjusts and reshapes the negative behaviour of pupils, heightening expression and perception, while helping the teachers approach them on a level more familiar to young children (e.g. through play) in order to gain their trust. After achieving this point, the next step is to help the pupils work for their autonomy, exploring themselves to earn confidence and skills (Basourakos, 1998; Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton, 2003; Henry, 2000). A more dynamic presence within the classroom of DiE is of course dependent on the context of the curriculum (Humphrey, 2002; Miller, 1988).

1.1.6 Current Study

DiE is the medium between the freedom that theatre provides from the daily routine of a person and the education one can achieve through its imaginative situations (Andersen, 2010; Nagy, Laskey & Allison, 1993). It provides access to modes of behaviour that would not usually be available to the participants, gradually developing and enhancing their skills gaining a better understanding of his/her limits and ways to expand them (Hatton, N., 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, it should not be omitted from the curriculum (Miller, 1988) since it constitutes a strong tool in the hands of teachers at primary level, when children are still experimenting with their skills, trying to achieve higher goals both for their sentient and social perception of the world. Especially for children with learning disabilities, as we shall see later in the chapter, if handled properly with care and interest, DiE can be the key to unlock a new world of self-expression and new ways of learning and understanding, deeply personalized to their needs.

In the current study, DiE was used by the researcher as a medium to approach the children on the level of playing and gaming, a level that was personalized to their needs and personalities. Being in an empty room with the lines between classroom and playground blurred, children could be encouraged to free their imagination and stay open to learning opportunities. But it is also a way to explore the potential of individuals that require the most support during school hours. And it is on those individuals this review will now focus.

1.1.7 Researcher's personal reflection

Children attend school to learn about the world we live in, as well as to train themselves how to behave and act within society. At least in principle, each educational system is trying to provide augmentation of their knowledge and skills since they are the assets of all nations. Because of that, ample opportunities should be provided for expanding their horizons, their development and their potential. But, as mentioned earlier, that is not

always the case. Sometimes, for any number of reasons, it is easier to provide and address the pupil body as a whole, thus the whole procedure loses or even sacrifices parts of its core to keep moving in a steady pace, instead of slowing down for those who need it.

Focusing on the whole pupil body, instead of individual pupils, allows the content of the annual curriculum to be covered by the end of the year, yet it may sacrifice attention for the individual pupil that may be struggling and eventually gets left behind. The one that falls behind stays behind – unless there is a particular case of a teacher who is actually interested and willing to help them as individual pupils and not just as pupils of a class. In this case, both pupils and teachers are in danger of losing their identities, becoming numbers and faceless performers of a repeating “auto-pilot” process of giving and receiving homework to be completed and not knowledge to be acquired. By losing their identity, even for a few hours daily, it is easy to lose touch with their inner self and each other. By doing this, it is easier for one to become passive than active as a character; and by staying passive, one might lose several opportunities of self-improvement. The acknowledgement of all the above, gained from both personal experience and through reviewing the relevant literature, led the way towards a more responsive approach to data collection that is presented in Chapter 2 of this Thesis.

1.2 Inclusive Education (IE)

Practically, using DiE for the individuals with learning difficulties falls under the umbrella of Inclusive Education. Both opt to offer education according to what a person needs in an inclusive environment for the child. If we explore the meaning behind inclusive education it quickly becomes obvious that many of its principles are similar to the ones described above.

The idea of Inclusive Education is based on the principle of contact hypothesis according to which children that have learning difficulties will be significantly relieved of their social, emotional and educational deficits by receiving the education they need

among peers with no difficulties in learning. That happens because the interaction between a mixed ability group has a positive outcome on the attitudes and opinions of pupils for their most sensitive peers (Allport, 1954; Maras & Brown, 2000). As stated by UNESCO (1994):

“...those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.” (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994, p. viii, in Artiles and al., 2006, p. 68)

Programmes that focus exclusively on pupils with learning difficulties, without integration and interaction with their peers, may not have optimal results for them (Artiles et al., 2006). Conversely, there is a significant number of studies regarding the role IE over the years (Baker & Walberg, 1995; Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Peetsma et al., 2001). Nonetheless, the definition of IE is still hazy because it accommodates a number of variables from generic to specific; from the redesign of the entire educational system of a country, to the current given school's installations and finally to the assimilation of learning difficulty pupils into a mixed classroom. In general, the broad and most commonly used definition is based on the last variable and encompasses:

“...a broad, boundary-blurring agenda across multiple perspectives that enrich learning, such as culture, language, migration, experience, ability, and religion for all students.” (in Artiles et al., 2006, p. 69),

giving access to and enhancing the participation of children with disabilities in normative contexts and practices as Artiles et al. support.

The definition might be broad but the principle behind it is very clear. IE concerns the feelings and ideas of children with difficulties about belonging to a peer group, being an active member of this group and being accepted for the person they are within it. Differentiating a child for any reason (race, religion, learning difficulties and others) from its classmates can lead to low-quality education excluding it from many of the sources and benefits the system provides, with plausible negative results on self-esteem or

social skills, as previously mentioned. Providing this inalienable right, IE is the commitment to educate each child, regardless if it is inside the learning difficulties spectrum or not, and essentially constitutes an attempt to strengthen the bonds of the school-classroom community (Nowicki, 2003).

More precisely, the main goal of IE is to:

1. "Increase access (or presence) for all students (not only marginalized or vulnerable groups),
2. Enhance staff and students' acceptance levels,
3. Maximize student participation in various domains of activity, and
4. Increase the achievement of all students."

(Booth et al., 2000; Kalamouka et al., 2005, p. 69 in Artiles et al. 2006)

In many ways, DiE and IE are two sides of the same coin, as they provide the means to conceptualize and enact supportive activities for children with learning difficulties. Both offer a differential approach for pupils with learning difficulties. It could be supported that IE is the reason to use DiE, since it provides the educational system and the participants with a rounded, innermost and non-superficial understanding of the world, society and themselves -which is the target of IE and the final goal of DiE.

All the above theories and standings though have no meaning or reason to be supported without taking a detailed look at one of the main possible reasons to support an inclusive and dramatized educational approach in the classroom: Self-Esteem, and in particular low self-esteem and its impact on pupils.

1.3 Self-Esteem (SE)

1.3.1 Definitions

When one asks what exactly self-esteem is, we have in our hands a straightforward question. The answer though is more complicated, mostly due to the absence of a

universally agreed upon definition A large number of different terms and definitions are used interchangeably, entangling many different terms under one umbrella (for example: self-esteem as self-image and others).

Self-Esteem, according to Marsh (2005), is the idea, feelings, thoughts and attitude about one's self. It is consisted of both positive and negative ego ideals (Mecca, Smelser & Vasconcellos, 1989; Rosenberg, 1965). For example: someone might believe that he is extremely good at water sports and, at the same time, terrible at acting on stage. It is the individual's self-sense of worth or worthiness. Also supported by Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem has motivational force. Individuals with a high level of SE work hard to maintain its level and at the same time to enhance its potency even more, while those with a low level of SE work hard on amplifying it (Rosenberg, 1979). It is also a necessary ingredient of self-verification individually and within a social group (Cast & Burke, 2002) and its enhancement and evolution is greatly bound with the person's achievements, as supported by Chetcuti and Griffiths (2002).

This researcher's personal stand on how exactly SE may be defined, agrees with Laurence's (1988) precise and clear idea of SE in his publication "Enhancing SE in the Classroom", in which he supports that:

"Self-Esteem is what the person feels about the discrepancy between what one is (definition of Self Image) and what one would like to be (definition of Ideal Self), all belonging to and defining the greater umbrella term of Self Concept" (in Hefferon, 2000, p.12),

with the latter term of Self-Concept generally defined as the person's perception of itself (Ross & Broh, 2000).

Therefore, it may be concluded that SE is omnipresent in the whole self-verification process, by playing an extremely important role in a person's thoughts, since what the person believes and wants for itself greatly influences its personality (inwards) and its actions (outwards) affecting the social environment and the achievements of that individual.

In sum, the essence of SE can be conceptualized and defined as: (1) the distance between what one's self really is and what one would like it to be, (2) a motive to improve and evolve, a supporting force to reach this goal through personal and group acquired achievements and (3) the final outcome (concept) of the self-verification process.

1.3.2 Theories

The various theories of SE may lead to the rationale that SE is not only either an outcome (e.g., Coopersmith, 1967; Harter, 1993; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rosenberg, 1979) or a self-motive (Kaplan 1975; Tesser 1988) or a buffer of the self (Longmore & DeMaris, 1997; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Spencer, Josephs & Steele, 1993; Thoits, 1994) as we clearly see being supported in prior studies and theories; it seems to simultaneously be all three of the above.

This unifying theory is mirrored in Cast and Brook's (2002) approach on SE in their paper "A theory of Self-Esteem". Based on Ervin and Stryker's work (2001), they try to: "set forth a theory of self-esteem that integrates the three conceptualizations within the context of structural symbolic interaction, or identity theory" (Cast & Brook, 2002, p.1042).

Approached either as a combination of terms or as an individual theory though, SE was always under the umbrella of Self Concept (Cast & Brook, 2002; Hefferon, 2000) and on some occasions it was considered such an important and exquisite aspect of the Self that SE was considered to Be the Self Concept of the individual (Rosenberg, 1976; Rosenberg, 1979 in Cast & Brook, 2002). The reasoning behind this collation of definitions was based on the common belief that it was through high SE that any individual (especially children and adolescents) can gain self-verification, through achieving personal goals and advancing their social status (Baumeister, 1993; Smelser, 1989 in Cast & Brook 2002).

The procedure of self-verification as part of the Self Concept through SE is thoroughly explained by Cast and Brook (2002) using Stryker's Identity Theory in which it is stated that "the self is composed of multiple identities that reflect the various social positions that an individual occupies in the larger social structure" (Stryker 1980, p.1042). An individual verifies itself when personal characteristics match the social situation's requested characteristics. This means that when an individual's skills are socially accepted and proved to be rightfully used and achieves recognition for its efforts, a feeling of self-competency and worth is created, thus increasing SE (Burke & Stets, 1999).

It is reasonable to hypothesize that if the individual fails to act or respond as expected at any phase of the above situation, the SE curve will take a turn towards a more negative outcome. So one might ask, "what about if that keeps happening because the individual loses a bit more of his SE and self-worth every time he fails"? As research has shown in such cases, very low SE may occur as well as mistrust in abilities and skills, with the resulting behaviour being keeping a neutral safe-distance from social groups and activities due to the individual's confusion and uncertainty of itself (Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989 in Kernis 2003; Griffiths 1993).

Consequently, it becomes apparent that it is necessary to explore research in the area towards an explanation of what exactly social skills are and why their connection with SE is of a major importance.

1.4 Social Skills (So. Skills)

1.4.1 Definitions

Before a definition of Social Skills is given, if again there is one broadly accepted as unique, it is necessary to define the terms Social Competence and Social Perception. That is because social competence is a multidimensional construct-definition (Gresham

& Reschly, 1988 in Gresham & MacMillan 1997; Nowicki, 2003) that includes the one of social perception which in its turn is greatly defined through the one of social skills.

There is lack of agreement regarding a definition of Social Competence (Nangle et al., 2010) but effectiveness within the society's norms (Cavel, 1990; Booth, Rubin, & Krasnor, 1998) and the acts and behaviour of the person (Dodge & Murphy, 1984) are core aspects of most of the definitions. Social success (Attili, 1990), ability to function appropriately in interpersonal interaction (Canino, Costello & Angold, 1999), use of environmental and personal resources to achieve developmental outcome (Waters & Sroufe, 1983) are some of the definitions used. Therefore, in more generic terms, social competence is the ability of an individual to successfully express his self (Elias et al., 1997) with socially desirable behaviours (Halberstadt, Denham & Dusmore, 2001; Mayer & Salovey, 1993; McFall, 1982).

Social Perception is defined as acting in the way each society demands and expects from each individual, while the individual must have a set of responsive acting skills (Clickeman, 2007) as well as of perceptual nature (Spence, 2003). In a self-aware and socio-aware person, social perception enhances his or her social competence, while social competence in itself is a product of a well-developed social perception. It is a cycle of self-efficacy that pushes the individual to act and react (Minne & Clikeman, 2012), confident that he or she can perform as needed in any social situation (Bandura, 1977; Clickeman, 2007; Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton, 2003).

Arriving at a definition of Social Skills, as vague as it may be (Eisler & Frederiksen, 1980), we may proceed to state that they are constituted by the responsive and perceiving techniques and actions, the ones through which social perception is manifested, needed by a person to complete a task within the social norm (Cavell, 1990; McFall, 1982; Gambrell & Ritchey, 1986; Gresham 1983 in Gresham & MacMillan 1997). Social skills include skills like: cooperation, self-control, empathy, ability to initiate and sustain social interaction and others (Elliot & McKinnie, 1994). Any deficits on those skills, might lead to a problematic social behaviour (Gresham, 1981; Gresham & Elliot, 1989).

1.4.2 Theories

From the moment we realize that the social skill deficits and their use, misuse or absence of use have the tendency -or better- the chance to lead towards a problematic social behaviour, since there is always the human condition in the background, it is logical to pinpoint the possible reasons behind this phenomenon. The deficits may occur when:

- a) "Either a skill has not been learned, thus cannot be performed or
- b) A competing deficit (such as anxiety) inhibits the acquisition of performance of the particular social skill".

(Kavale & Moster, 2004, p. 32)

To acquire the missing skill or enhance the performance of the existing underdeveloped ones, the individual can participate in skill training programmes (i.e. Belliveau, 2007; Kenneth, Kavale & Moster, 2004; Shillingford & Shillingford-Mackin, 1991). Such programmes are seen to increase achievements, both academic and professional, and set a solid base for a long-term personal evolution. These programmes cover areas such as: starting a conversation, learning how to listen, responding to failure, setting a goal and others.

To reach this goal of the adoption of effective social interaction patterns, the individuals will have to go through a rehearsal like procedure that will include at least some of the following actions: (a) Direct instruction, (b) Coaching, (c) Modeling, (d) Rehearsal, (e) Shaping, (f) Prompting and (g) Reinforcement (e.g., Cartledge & Millburn, 1986 in Kenneth, Kavale & Moster, 2004, p. 33; Combs & Slaby, 1978; Elliot & Busse 1991, Table 4; Gresham, 1981)

Contextualizing this procedure at the level of the primary classroom its possible outcomes could include:

- a) "Peer acceptance
- b) Significant others' positive judgments of social competence
- c) Academic achievement

- d) Adequate self-concept
- e) Positive attitudes towards school and
- f) Freedom from loneliness”

(Gresham, 1983 in Gresham & MacMillan, 1997, p. 381)

Both (a) and (b) are practically a child's social status within a peer composed group, since its place is greatly affected by the views and opinions that peers have on its social skills (Frederickson & Furnham, 1998 in Gresham and MacMillan 1997, p 178). A child being confident with his socio-interacting skills may enjoy a popular social status while lack of confidence usually leads towards an unpopular-lonely status (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982 in Gresham and MacMillan 1997, p 178).

It could be reasonable to claim that these social skill enhancing interventions should take place within the child's peer environment; in fact, there have been a number of studies that support such activities within group work as having a variety of benefits on SE and motivation (Galton & Williamson, 1992; Slavin, 1990). Such interventions focus mostly on social interaction (Barker-Lunn, 1984; Barnes et al, 1969; Barnes & Todd, 1977; Mortimore et al., 1988; Slavin, 1990; Tough, 1977) within mixed social skill ability groups (for reviews see Bennett & Descombe, 1985; Galton & Williamson, 1992; Rogers & Kutnick, 1990; Yeomans, 1983). The reason that a mixed ability group is preferred is partly based on ethical reasons, so that the child will not be stigmatized within the school environment as “different”, and partly because children with normal or high functioning social skill efficiency may be encouraged effectively to support peers to reach their goals.

1.5 Learning Difficulties (LD)

1.5.1 Definitions

The final part of this chapter focuses specifically on children with LD. According to the definition of Learning Disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, LD as a term has been used to:

“...identify and subsequently inform instruction for children struggling in the classroom. The characteristics typically defining children with LD include recognition of a neurological processing disorder impacting oral or written language as exhibited in tasks involving speaking, listening, reading, writing, spelling, or mathematic calculations. The term learning disability does not include individuals with sensory impairment (e.g., deaf, blind), mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage; although individuals with these handicapping conditions frequently have difficulty learning” (IDEA, 34 Code of Federal Regulations §300.8(c)(10) in Funderburk, Nye & Schwartz, 2009, p. 2).

LD is a term that refers to a variety of learning difficulties closely attached to the academic performance of a child and to a disorder in one or more basic psychological processes, including a broad spectrum from visual or auditory to motor and language processing ones (Lyon, 1996; Vaughn & Hogan, 1994 in Nowicki 2003).

There is not a single agreed upon definition of LD, due to disagreement on its etiology, criteria of evaluation and of possible interventions (Drakos, 2002; Fletcher et al., 1993; Funderburk, Nye & Schwartz, 2009; Lyon, 1987; Lyon, 1996; Moats & Lyon, 1993). Since the definition is not universal, LD is often used interchangeably with the terms Learning Problems, Learning Difficulty, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and so forth (Funderburk, Nye & Schwartz, 2009). Although LD targets mostly difficulties in academic achievement, difficulties in self-regulation or social perception and social interaction may also exist in children with LD (Humphrey, 2002; Wong, 1991), as is further analyzed below.

1.5.2 Theories and Types of LD

While, as mentioned, LD is conceptualized “as a disorder”, in reality it is more of a category of disabilities that belong to a broad but specific spectrum of mental processes, very frequently manifested in the school environment. These processes include:

1. Receptive language (Listening)
 2. Expressive language (Speaking)
 3. Basic reading skills
 4. Reading comprehension
 5. Written comprehension
 6. Mathematics calculation
 7. Mathematical reasoning
- (Lyon, 1996; Vaughn & Hogan, 1994)

It is through these processes of formal educational contexts that the children have to verify themselves in, through the means of their accomplishments. They are identified as being the subject of LD based on the discrepancy between those exact achievements and the disability examined (Gresham & MacMillan, 1997); in other words, the more effective they are and the better they perform (i.e. at Reading), the less chance they have to be identified with LD (such as Dyslexia on the given field) and vice versa. The first two disabilities, on (1) Listening and (2) Reading, also affect another spectrum of a pupil's daily life; namely his or her interpersonal-social relationships, both peer and teacher-related. The latter is important because it is through these people that a child starts building trust and adjusts to the new school environment, and partly because it is through the teacher's eyes and reactions that any LD problem will be detected and dealt with. The peer relationships on the other hand have greater gravitational pull on the child's self-concept because they are proof of peer acceptance resulting in the all-important formation of friendships (Asher, 1990; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Walker, McConnell, & Clark, 1985).

The most common and major issue of children with LD relates to their difficulties in academic achievement (Kistner & Osborne, 1987), of which repeated failure is the norm and due to which negative self-concept and deficiencies in SE during the early school years are observed (Rogers & Saklofske, 1985; Winne, Wong, & Woodlands, 1982). The social competence of the child is also a big issue that is discussed within the LD theory-crafting, since it greatly affects SE and social skills (Gresham, 1992; Gresham & Elliott, 1989; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; LaGreca & Stone, 1990; Vaughn & Hogan, 1990). It is observable that LD theories are intertwined with the development of the Self.

1.5.3 LD and Schooling

It was calculated by Bryan (1991) and Lyon (1996) that about 5% of the pupils at school have some form of LD or a number of co-existing LDs alongside a possible deficiency in their social skills or some kind of behaviour disorder such as low SE, depression, or anxiety, always in comparison to their non-LD peers (Bruck, 1986). According to registers from the American IDEA, that number approached 11% between the years 1991-1995, reaching the zenith of 14% of the total population of public school enrollments between the years 2004-2005, lowered to 13% between the years 2013-2014 (NCED, 2016). For England, these numbers reached 1,198,000 during the year 2010, with approximately 298,000 of them as children and teenagers between the ages of 0-17 (Emerson et al., 2010).

A possible reason for all these negative behaviours, feelings and deficiencies can be prior academic failures (Lyon, 1996) from a time when being successful meant to excel in school and the Self was more vulnerable to failure and mocking. Academic failure can modulate the SE of the individual, the lack of will and motive to continue and increase introversion, to avoid comparison or confrontation with others (Humphrey, 2002; Thomaes et al., 2010).

Thus, unless identified early on, LD could create a chain event of low academic achievement-SE rate that will have its own way of evolving as the child will reach

adulthood that could include dropping out of school, and a lack of a higher education (Martin, 1993) or even professional career (Fairweather & Shave, 1990). Unfortunately, it is hard to identify LD during the very first years of a child at school and it is even harder to find and sustain a qualified teaching assistant by its side, trained to teach LD children, ready and willing to help with any intervention needed for the child to succeed at school. This is especially true for the Greek context of mainstream schooling for children with LDs, as little support is provided by the State in these cases and parents rely on their private means for any therapeutic intervention. For a minority of children, however, that were advantaged with early identification and intervention, follow-up long-term observation research indicates that they encountered less psychological obstacles in their course in life (Lyon, 1996; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 1994)

1.5.4 Self Esteem and LD

The possible psychological damage that low SE can cause is not negligible but it is possible for the adult to cope through and around any situation created by it using his or her already developed experiences and skills, assets for professional help or by relying on the support of his or her social circle (Spekman, Goldberg & Herman, 1992; Vogel and Adelman, 1992). In younger ages though, taking into account the lack of trust on the individual's own skills, the distancing from social encounters and activities due to a possible increased uncertainty can, at least in theory, prove to be challenging for the foundations of the development of a positive self-concept and social self.

According to Lawrence (1988) there is a link between SE and personal achievements; also according to Shavelson and Bolus (1982), self-concept, which includes SE as it was shown, is the perception of the experiences and interpretations of one's environment, which is greatly influenced through the evaluations, either negative or positive, of the people around the individual. Keeping those in mind, there can be a safe link between the SE of the individual child (self-image and ideal self) and the school environment through the academic achievements this environment offers and requests to be achieved (such as reading and writing, proper behaviour etc) (Faunce, 1984; White,

1986). High SE creates opportunities for more achievements-if the child has good personal relationships with its peers and believes in itself the chances are high that it will create a goal and follow it- and at the same time high achievement ratio bolsters SE-since success mostly makes individuals feel proud and motivates them to do a lot more, especially within an approving social group.

The researcher uses words like “probably”, “in case”, “risk of”, “mostly” above and not presenting the thoughts as absolutes for two reasons. First and in a more generic sense, because of the human factor: not all humans are the same, their actions and reactions may share common details but they do not by any means respond in exactly same way with each incentive given to them. Secondly, and specifically close to the subject of this research, because of a variation between SE and behaviour that is expected in pupils with LD according to previous research studies (e.g., Kloomok & Cosden, 1994; Smith & Nagle, 1995).

According to Cosden et al. (1999):

“The literature describes four ways in which scholastic performance is, and is not, associated with self-perception (which is received as the individual's understanding of the specific characteristics associated with having LD, keeping in mind that according to the writers the terms "self-concept," "self-esteem" and "self-perception" are often interdependent and difficult to assess as separate entities) for children with LD.” (p. 280)

The four ways, simplified by the researchers below, are:

1. “Children with LD do not diminish the importance of academic performance as a way of enhancing their self-esteem” (Clever, Bear, & Juvonen, 1992; Kloomok & Cosden, 1994).
2. “Children with less severe learning disabilities feel better about their academic abilities, and about themselves, than do pupils with more severe disabilities” (Kistner et al., 1987; Kloomok & Cosden, 1994).

3. “Regardless of their actual academic achievement, children with positive perceptions of their academic skills tend to have higher global self-esteem”, as suggested by Heath’s (1995) research and explained by Hagborg’s (1996) research, both of them on children with LD.
4. “Pupils with LD who report higher self-esteem are able to separate their intellectual abilities from their specific academic performance and see themselves as intellectually competent”. Again in Heath’s (1995) paper, it is suggested by the data that depressed pupils with LD have a greater chance for incompatibility between their actual and perceived intellectual skills than non-depressed pupils, a thesis that is supported both for children and adults with LD from other studies (Heyman, 1990; Rothman & Cosden, 1995; Wilczenski, 1992).

The ways and approaches may differ, but the outcome is the same: there are pupils with LD in schools that have low self-esteem and cannot express themselves or approach the subjects of the class, the activities of the school or their peers and teachers with confidence; they stand alone and confused, waiting for something to change. In many cases, they may not even be sure that they want that change, even if it is for the better, because it will mean that they will have to leave their neutral, comfort, safe-zone/bubble, to be exposed to criticism and create a strong personal opinion through debates. It is up to the teachers, at least, if not up to the school or even the educational system as a whole, to do something for these children; something beyond the usual, since they silently request and, above all, need a more personalized and unique approach as individual children.

1.5.5 Social Skills and LD

A deficit in social skills can lead to problematic social behaviour and the literature suggests and supports that this burden falls more on the shoulders of children with LD than those without, no matter the type of LD (Bryan, 1991).

Gresham and MacMillan (1997) support that there is an extensive list of studies proving that children with LD (varying in all terms of the spectrum, from the mildest ones to the most serious cases) exhibit deficiencies in their social skills as well as behaviours that are very difficult to deal with (i.e. Gresham, 1992; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Landau & Moore, 1991; Merrell et al., 1992; Swanson & Malone, 1992; Walker & McConnell, 1988). They refer to those deficits as:

“...being either acquisition or performance deficits which may or may not be accompanied by internalizing and/or externalizing interfering problem behaviors.”
(Gresham & MacMillan 1997, p. 389)

Especially in the case of Swanson and Malone's (1992) research the ratings between peers and social acceptance/rejection were in favor of children without LD, a resolution shared also by Ochoa and Olivarez's research (1995), where they concluded that LD children have lower sociometric status than their non-LD peers. So it is apparent that children with LD face the risk of social/peer rejection leading to (or arising from) SE issues than non-LD or high achieving children (Nowicki, 2003).

As was presented, LD can greatly affect SE (and vice versa) through depression, anxiety, withdrawal and other similar situations. Both can affect the individual's social skills too even if there is not already a deficiency on their performance (Bruck, 1986). Lack of knowledge on how to greet people, engage in activities (i.e. games) or interact in an appropriate manner, apologizing and expressing feelings are just a few of the examples of reasons/outcomes of the vicious $LD \leftrightarrow SE \leftrightarrow So$. Skills \leftrightarrow LD circle (Kenneth, Kavale & Moster, 2004).

As examined above, LD and SE deficiencies can lead towards social skill deficiencies and eventually peer rejection inside the school environment. And it is the case that any lack of social skills compromises both the child's present and future social behaviour and status (Vaughn et al., 1992) through differentiation from the peer group. There are intervention programmes though that can help the child minimize the harm and evolve through and beyond the deficiency, if they are pursued at the right time with the right way.

1.5.6 Current Study

The researcher initially wanted to focus the current research purely on children with LD, especially the ones with Dyslexia for personal reasons (such as his own acquaintance with many dyslexic peers as a pupil in the past). Due to the educational system of Greece though, which supports the mixed-ability classroom with both LD and non-LD pupils, the researcher reconsidered a mixed sample, a choice which became clearer and easier considering the Ethics behind it: at all stages of the research it would not be desirable for the researcher if the participants would be stigmatized or ostracized in any way as “different” or “peculiar” by their peers.

During the study, both in terms of literature and in terms of field research, it was kept in mind that LD is everything that inhibits a child’s ability to learn; either inherent or ephemeral, dysgraphia or dyslexia, family problems or bullying at school the outcome is the same: inhibition of the education process. Where the traditional ways of education or enhancing the inner self do not achieve success, it is in alternative and new solutions that any new attempts should be based on; in the case of this study, using drama to make an individual regain trust of people and progressively towards himself/herself is a viable creative solution.

DiE is a valuable tool in the hands of experienced teachers with the will and time to grant their pupils what they need and deserve; thus, the current research was based on the observations of the researcher on the intervention programme he created during the weekly hour of Theatrical Play of two mixed pupil classes. The final goal is to prove that role-playing and tension relieving through group activities can effectively be used within the school time and education process to approach and bolster the SE of LD pupils who need or silently request it.

Summary

Summarizing the current chapter, it was shown that each one of the encountered terminologies in the fields of Drama in Education, Inclusive Education, Self-Esteem, Social Skills and Learning Difficulties are interconnected in the current study.

Beginning with Drama in Education it was stated that it consists of the medium between Drama as a form of Art and Theatre as a form of Education; its main goal is the acquisition and evolution of interpersonal social skills, alongside the development of the self-confidence and self-esteem of the individual. Due to its commune nature, DiE is easily paired with Inclusive Education which aims to strengthen the pre-mentioned inter-social bonds between all the participants in the project/class, avoiding the creation of social discrepancies and exclusion due to learning difficulties and other causes, which might lead to diminished self-esteem and various socially-oriented problems.

Focusing more precisely on the two-fold goal of DiE and what exactly it is that it promotes, the Self-Esteem of the individual is defined as what a person really is and what he/she would like to be, an outcome that is gradually accomplished through personal and group oriented achievements; these group-oriented achievements embody the connection of SE with DiE as an inner personal development and outcome of DiE. To complete a task within a social group and/or norm though, one needs at least a basic level of Social Skills; these embody the other positive outcome of DiE, the acquisition and evolution of interpersonal Social Skills, and they consist of the techniques and actions through which social perception is manifested.

Deficiencies in Social Skills and diminishing of SE can lead to a problematic social behaviour outwards and a diminished idea of the Self inwards; both these conditions can easily lean towards the manifestation of learning difficulties, or can be the outcome of learning difficulties as a reason and/or form of social ostracism, as it was previously mentioned. Learning Difficulties render a disorder in one or even more basic psychological processes (from visual to auditory or even motor and language oriented ones), creating a variety of short-term struggles closely attached to academic

performance which eventually, if not treated carefully, can lead to long term effects even when the individual reaches adulthood (i.e. social isolation, anxiety).

These different theories are merged under one umbrella in the current study; mainly through the use of Drama in Education as a medium to prevent the manifestation of LD or enhance the interpersonal skills and self-esteem of the participant individuals in need of an intervention of that kind through its group oriented activities. DiE offers the individual a way to gain better understanding over his/her emotional palette, critical thought and interpersonal skills. He/she will be able to venture into an imaginative world, a safe haven where there are no negative consequences, a place where the individual will not feel inhibited to act and react, gradually increasing his/her skill level through repetition. Eventually, through that increase of his/her skills or the acquisition of new ones, the individual can start connecting patterns and behaviours acquired during the role-play activity with similar ones in real life, realizing that he/she is able to deal with them in a different way than before, bridging the psychological chasm rendered by his/her LD onto his/her SE and Social Skills. These theories, the goals and aims of the current study lead the inquiry towards the adoption of particular Methodologies and Tools of Data Collection which are now presented.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will present the methods used in the current study to investigate the use of Drama in the classroom for the development of children's self-esteem and social skills. In this study, as mentioned, children with learning difficulties are targeted. The research adopts the methodology of qualitative research, an approach that is considered useful for studying the perception of self and of social abilities. The key challenge for the researcher was to select those qualitative tools that would have the most promising results while also being easy to be employed during the data collection process.

In order to make a connection with the previous chapter and give the reasoning for the methodological decisions of the study, the aim of this study as well as its research questions are presented below:

- Aim of the study:

Investigate and present whether through socio-dramatic play and activities pupils with LD develop their self-esteem and gain better and/or new social competence skills.

- Research Questions:

1. In what ways might pupils' participation in drama activities increase their self-esteem?
2. Are social skills acquired and/or further developed when participating in drama activities and how is this evidenced?

The interpretative nature of the research questions guided the methodology of the current study and led the researcher to adopt an in-depth qualitative research stance. In essence, they guided this investigator to adopt an inquisitive direction during fieldwork, constantly questioning and adjusting his point of view in the light of the new data collected. In the sections below the ways in which this stance is put into practice are further analyzed and evidenced as much in the method selected (case study that borrows elements from ethnography) as in the strategy for the analysis.

2.1 Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research provides the researcher with the ability to become part of the data collection procedure, a data collection instrument of words and pictures in real life situations, while being able to analyze them in their inner folds and hidden meanings, towards a better understanding of the participants' perspective. It is a “raw” experience which is converted into words (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest,

“Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 in Creswell, 2007, p. 36)

It involves studying and collecting data through a variety of empirical situations and materials, such as personal experience, introspection, case studies, observational, historical and visual texts and others. All the above, aim to provide a thorough description over each participant's everyday moments, while also provide a meaning behind them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Additionally, according to Creswell (1998):

“Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.” (p.15)

As viewed in the above definitions, the natural settings in which the participants live and work/act are key to qualitative research. Equally important is the focus on the perspectives and beliefs of the participants and how they perceive the world around them (Bogdan & Iklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991). Both were important for the current study.

Qualitative research offers to the researcher the chance to participate as a person in the social life of the target group and not just as a distant observer. The participants are not objects of the research but collaborators during the process (Mason, 2003; Mishler, 1996). Both society and human behaviour consist of a vast horizon of interweaving possibilities, reasoning, meanings and actions, thus this complex is needed to be understood from the inside and not just observed from the outside. The role of the researcher is explored in detail further below, however the prior experiences of the researcher and his motivation for undertaking this study, could not allow him to be a distant observer in the process of data collection.

Moreover, approaching the individuals in their daily setting and trying to understand and follow the norms of their “class’s society” is expected to give detailed and thorough information and results, with the researcher trying to participate and understand the world through the individuals’ point of view. The aim of the qualitative approach is to avoid a priori judgments. For the current study, the data collection protocol was designed to be flexible in order to allow for participants' views to be fully acknowledged and taken into account and for shifts in the design of the tools to take place during fieldwork. In Arts research in particular, Fleming, Merrell and Tymms (2004) support that:

“Qualitative research which emerged as a challenge to prevailing scientific models has now become the dominant orthodoxy in arts and drama. It is not surprising that artistic pursuits should find more affinity with qualitative research.

The arts are more at home with narratives than numbers. Such approaches are more equipped to explore process and to deal with the ambiguities and complexities found in the arts.” (p.178)

Based on all the previous statements, and by following the lead of other studies on the field with similar subject and procedures over research (i.e. Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton 2003; Portman-Minne & Semrud-Clikeman, 2012), this researcher decided to follow a qualitative approach towards the study’s completion, since he strongly believed that any form of quantitative approach would not offer as much insight in between the subtle changes and folds of social interaction and emotional evolution of the participants, according to the aim and research questions of the study.

The selection of a qualitative methodology also impacted on the sample of children targeted, with a smaller sample of pupils being selected in order to pay full attention over a longer time period in their self-perspectives and actions. More information on the sampling of the current study is given later in this chapter.

2.2 Research Method – Case Study with Ethnographic Characteristics

2.2.1 General Characteristics of the Case Study Approach

In response to the above research questions and aims, it was decided that the case study approach would be the most beneficial for the research. This research approach is fruitful in cases where an issue has to be investigated not only in depth but also within the context of a real life situation, such as a school or classroom, thereby giving explanations and making connections, generalizations and parallelisms between similar circumstances (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007; Denscombe 2007). In the current study, the selection of the case study method required a targeted, narrow group of participants and in this case the two groups of children were neither too large to compromise the process itself nor too small to prohibit the collection of data necessary to answer the research questions: (1) in what ways the pupil participants increased their

self-esteem and (2) were there any social skills acquired and/or further developed when participating in drama activities and how is this evidenced.

Case studies work best with how or why questions, when attention to behaviours and their explanation are more important than simple description of events, though this too is necessary. According to Cohen et al. (2007), the case study method is a specific instance planned to illuminate a more general principle, providing a unique view of people in real-life situations and community systems (such as a class, a school, a clique and others). It allows and enables people to understand theories and ideas plainly and clearly, while demonstrating the application of a theory in a real life situation and compare its results to other similar cases and situations (i.e. arising problems or opportunities and how or when they can be used towards the participants' benefit).

One of the advantages of the case study is that it can illustrate facts on situations that are not necessarily subject to numerical analysis, as in the case of artistic pursuits. Case study research distinctively focuses on the depth of the study rather than its breadth, targeting the core of the situation instead of covering the broad results, as for example happens in research employing quantitative methods (i.e. survey). The case study maintains a holistic view of the situation, considering both human relationships and the process as a whole, instead of focusing on isolated facts or only on their possible outcomes, since human relationships within social settings tend to be interconnected and interrelated. In the current study, the investigator was more interested in the details and complexities of human relationships, on participants' perspectives and actions, and how the above connect and impact with each other (Denscombe, 2007).

2.2.2 Ethnographic Characteristics

The term of Ethnography is often associated with qualitative research projects, aiming to enlighten and describe everyday life situations in their respective environments (Merriam, 1998), keeping in mind that people placed into any particular environment are

initiated into particular kinds of knowledge and types of behaviour (Kushner, 2000). Because it uses an extensive amount of detail and information for the necessary descriptions, it is also known as “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). It is defined as a method of conducting qualitative research and, at the same time, it is also the outcome of that research, aiming for the cultural interpretation of a phenomenon’s construction and the web of possible meanings and connections (Creswell 2007; Hoey, 2014). Ethnography can become a powerful tool of articulating the everyday life situations, their possible hidden meanings and their final findings (Woods, 1996).

This study, while not an Ethnography as such, adopts core characteristics of an ethnographic approach towards the data collection and its interpretation, analysis and writing up of the findings. In other words, and to avoid confusion, this researcher uses some elements of Ethnography (such as “thick description”, an insider’s approach to collecting data, participant observation as a tool for data collection) that allowed deeper insight, knowledge and understanding over the processes the study aimed to research. The aspects of the ethnographic approach that this study borrows can be located in (1) the researcher’s role in the classroom as a participant observer, (2) the “thick description” necessarily provided, in the later chapter of the Data Analysis and (3) the subjective interpretations of the findings, in the chapters of Discussion and Conclusion.

2.2.3 Case Study with Ethnographic Characteristics

This type of case study was selected from a wide variety of forms of case study research. According to Yin (2003) there are three types of case study research: (1) exploratory, (2) descriptive and (3) explanatory, a classification that agrees with Meriam’s (1988) and Stake’s (1994). In short, these researchers support that a case study (1) is developed as a pilot to be used and understood as a base to be used by other studies, (2) provides inside information of the event/participants explaining and giving reasoning of their actions and thoughts and (3) reaches conclusions over the possible assumptions while testing the previous theories. Apart from those core *types*, case studies can also be “ethnographic”, “evaluative”, “educational”, and others

(Stenhouse, 1988). The use of ethnography in the current study is informed by a need for “thick description” of behaviours and of detailed social interactions as pupils engaged in the Drama activities.

Similarly, case studies need accurate description and subjective, yet disciplined interpretation of their data and its manifold possible meanings, factors also supported and provided by an ethnographic approach.; their main focus is targeted on different perceptions of culture and social phenomena; they require at least a short amount of empathy as a skill to understand and interpret the situations at hand and the data acquired, within the respective natural environment that the study is taking place (Stake, 2000). In short, the current approach was selected because of the in-depth understanding and detailed observation it both offers to the researcher and requires of him to narrate and interpret the situations, social connections, perspectives and inner feelings of the participant individuals of the study.

2.3 Role of the Researcher

During the unfolding of the theory, the presentation of the data and data analysis following in the next chapters the reader will also encounter the researcher’s active role into this study. His role during the research part of the programme was twofold: to be the “director” of the activities during each individual meeting with the participants, explaining to them the idea behind the game-activity that it was set for that particular day, as well as the collector of data. This way he was able to not only be amidst the flow of events and record them on the spot, but he was also able to provide directions and solutions whenever needed. Practically he embodied the role his own professors had during the theatre classes at the university, towards the participants this time, and also the one of the researcher.

In other words, the role of the researcher was the one of observer and instigator of action akin to what is often termed “participant as observer” in the literature (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). This essentially means that when action was reaching a point

of stagnation, the researcher was there to provide more ideas of what could be done and even how, depending on the daily meeting schedule. By observing the children's actions the researcher was able to collect the required data. Practically he was there to reignite their imagination, while keeping their spirit high through positive comments, gently advising and requesting them to act and participate in the fun/action.

What made this role hard was the issue of gaining the children's trust. Although the children without LD problems and those with a very vivid and energetic personality quickly bonded with the researcher, the rest were more cautious. It took the researcher some time to gain their trust, since he was neither a teacher to be "respected" as one, neither a peer to play with. From the moment though that they started opening themselves to the new experience, after gentle and positive words, positive behaviour and scaffolding both from the researcher and their peers, everything evolved smoothly and with geometric progress.

From that moment onwards, they were open to suggestions and tried to participate without being asked because they were on the same page with the rest of their peers, although on a different level. This role constituted a hard-to-reach crossroad between teacher, researcher, observer and older friend, but had great rewards on a personal and scientific level.

2.4 Data Collection Tools

In this section the various tools employed for the collection of the data are presented. In the context of the case study design the study initially aimed to use three tools: (1) participant observation, (2) interviews and (3) a questionnaire.

While the study aimed to gather data using all of the above tools of research, having as a goal the triangulation of the results, in practice this proved to be challenging, mostly due to technical reasons and difficulties. For example, while pre- and post-interviews with teachers and children had been planned, the school's busy schedule did not allow additional time besides that which was provided for the intervention and drama

activities. In spite of this lack of time, however, the researcher did manage to conduct an interview with each of the classroom teachers respectively as well as speak to groups of children near the end of the research. Concerning the questionnaire, although time had been set aside for its piloting and development, the pilot study prior to the research to check its validity was not conducted due to denial from many sources to participate in the process. Without a pilot study to prove its validity, the researcher decided to avoid using the questionnaire completely, avoiding the collection of what would most probably be false data.

Although these difficulties were met, the results of the data collection process were more than helpful to understand and expand the horizons of this researcher's way of approaching the study and his field of research. The raw data that was gathered offered a deeper and more realistic understanding both of the environment where the current study was taking place and for each of its participants individually. In short, the researcher managed to verify thoughts and hunches he had for most of the participants, created by his own personal observations, and he gained a deeper understanding of their pattern of behaviours and feelings.

Below, each one of the two data collection tools that were finally used (participant observation and interviews) will be individually presented and discussed according to what their use offered towards the result of this study and the limitations that were encountered.

2.4.1 Participant Observation

Observation protocols offer the researcher the ability to gather "live" data in naturally occurring, real life social situations; it consists a direct look of what is happening, in place it is happening enabling the researcher to look and understand everyday behaviours that are otherwise taken for granted or pass unnoticed (Cooper & Schindler 2001; Pattron, 1990).Cohen et al (2007) on the topic of observation also suggest that:

“One can detect a putative continuum from the observation of uncontestable facts to the researcher’s interpretation and judgment of situations, which are then recorded as observations. What counts as evidence becomes cloudy immediately in observation, because what we observe depends on when, where and for how long we look, how many observers there are, and how we look. It also depends on what is taken to be evidence of, or a proxy for, an underlying, latent construct.” (p. 396)

This is the reason why this researcher decided to “blend in” the classroom environment of the children and not distance himself from them taking on a non-participant observer role. This decision was made so that the children would continue to act and react as they normally would around the researcher and thereby minimize any effect that would be created due to children’s unease with being constantly observed by a “stranger”. More important, however, was the decision to conduct the research across nine weeks, which was deemed to be just enough time for the children to accept the researcher and feel comfortable with – as it turned out, children seemed to relax already from the second session.

On the above matter we read in Cohen et al. (2007) that:

“Participant observation may be particularly useful in studying small groups, or for events and processes that last only a short time or are frequent, for activities that lend themselves to being observed, for researchers who wish to reach inside a situation and have a long time available to them to ‘get under the skin’ of behavior or organizations (as in an ethnography), and when the prime interest is in gathering detailed information about what is happening (i.e. is descriptive).” (p. 404)

In short, participant observation was chosen as an approach because it allows the researcher to recognize and collect data on frequent, ongoing, non-verbal behaviour the moment this behaviour makes its appearance. All that is enhanced by the fact the research took place over a long period of time (9 weeks), allowing the progressive

development of trust towards the researcher from the children's side, thus making them act "naturally" around him (Cohen et al., 2007).

On a further note, participant observation was supported by audio recordings of the meetings as a very useful way to keep track of what was happening and when during the observation time. All records and notes taken in the classroom were transcribed shortly after they were gathered. That procedure allowed the researcher to maintain the mental image of what happened during the meeting. This way, the whole meeting can be fully recollected even months later, with some certainty that no detail large or small was omitted.

2.4.2 Interviews

The researcher used the research tool of the Interview in parallel to Observation. A semi-structured interview with the main teacher for each of the two classrooms took place during the research, while there was also another shorter interview with the participants at the end of the programme. As a 'flexible tool for data collection' that gives 'space for spontaneity' and provides 'responses about complex and deep issues' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.349), the interview allowed the researcher to probe further into the topic of the research by providing opportunities for participants to express in depth their perspectives on the drama activities and the interactions that took place throughout the meetings.

The aim behind the teachers' interviews at the middle of the fifth (5th) week of the programme (see also the Table 1: Timeline of the Research, p. 59) was to gather further verbal data about the children that were suspected of having some form of LD over their social behaviour patterns in class. Those interviews were conducted a bit later than what was desired but that particular delay gave the researcher the opportunity to collect rich observational data that comprised an initial social profile of the children and create initial theories about the participants in relation to the aim of the study. Through these interviews and through the previous off-record short conversations with the teachers

about their pupils, the researcher managed to cross-validate his social-classroom profile both for the whole class and for the children with LD in particular. Also, he was able to verify some of the changes in the children's behaviour that he observed through the eyes of the main teachers of the class, a term broadly used in Greece about the teachers responsible of conducting the majority of a class's lessons. These teachers were specifically chosen to be interviewed, and not someone else that would teach secondary classes such as Gymnastics, since they have already spent almost a year with each class, to a minimum of three hours daily. Thus, these teachers have the highest chance and ability to observe changes on each child's behaviour and responsive pattern towards both adults and their peers.

As mentioned, the interviews themselves were semi-structured trying to maintain a flexible question protocol, while also allowing teachers to freely expand their responses towards new paths. The researcher allowed teachers the space to talk extensively about their pupils, providing the richest amount of information they could and were willing to give. The researcher was following the question protocol on both interviews, trying to focus on everything the teachers had to offer as extra information to understand the behaviour behind the action of the children, as to properly deal with their needs during the meetings. For example, in one of the interviews he learned that one of the participants had not seen its father in a long period of months and that affected its behaviour in the classroom, leading to a mischievous attitude towards its peers and teachers to attract their attention, by any means necessary. That gave the researcher the reasoning behind why that child was always wandering around when the rest were sitting down and watching carefully, while he was constantly probing on new ways of getting our attention. Thus the researcher realized that the problem that was affecting that child's behaviour in class was mostly psychological and based on affection and need for attention so he adjusted his behaviour towards that particular individual to be even more understanding and patient, asking for less or more action depending on what mood the child was in at each given day. This is but one example of an insightful piece of information acquired during the teachers' interviews that offered a way forward during interaction with the children in the meetings. That is a clear example of the insight acquired by the teacher's interviews, providing the benefit of offering a steady base of

knowledge on which the researcher could stand on and safely plan his actions towards the participants individually.

On the other hand, the researcher acquired valuable information about how the children were acting in the classroom before and after the start of the research. For most of the cases that the teachers pointed out as having LD or low self-esteem, there was not any particular difference. There were a few though that showed a great change towards a more positive social behaviour after a couple of the first on-stage activities and especially by the end of the programme. These children were withdrawn and introvert both in the classroom and during the drama activities; after they acted their very first time on stage and got positive feedback though, they started behaving in a more assertive manner. Without the teacher's insight on all these cases, providing valuable context information about the pupils' behaviour and difficulties, it would neither be easy for the researcher to focus and adjust himself nor to keep a sharp eye on the children that actually needed more attention.

At the end of the programme, there was a short impromptu interview with the children that participated throughout the whole duration of the programme, since some had to leave many times for other school obligations (rehearsal for the school play and other reasons). The aim of their interview was to gain inside information and their opinion on the activities and the whole meeting programme we had and also whether they believed that this whole procedure helped them to understand and socialize better with others. All their answers were positive on both questions and they were quite confident while answering, even the cases of the children that used to whisper or even only nod when asked a question during the previous weeks.

2.5 Research Procedure

2.5.1 Access

The researcher applied to the Ministry of Education for permission to conduct the research in a state school, in accordance with the procedure followed for all educational research in Greece. While waiting for the response, he also visited a broad number of private primary schools of Athens. The procedure was the same as the one followed in the state schools. Both principals and teachers there though, had a more cautious reaction towards this research, making it clear that the proposal had to pass through the director's committee first and then to be authorized by the participants' parents. The latter, were presented as people who would most probably be difficult to persuade to allow their child to participate in the activities. Before the Ministry of Education's final (negative) answer, one of the private sector schools granted access, and thus was selected for the setting of the study although the researcher was more than interested to conduct the research in a state school. According to his personal beliefs and experiences it is there that this type of educational research is most needed, due to the insufficient amount of teachers per classroom- only a handful of them are responsible for a large number of children, especially since the period of economic crisis started in Greece.

It should be stated that before access was granted, the researcher had several conversations with the school's director over the procedure and the ethics of the programme and also on which classes included the most compelling participants, as a number of LD children needed to be observed at the same time.

The researcher visited the private school again after his application was accepted and talked with the main teachers of the two classes he would work with. The term "main teacher" is a broadly used term in Greek schools, applying to the teacher responsible for most of the lessons in the Primary curriculum. Also, the researcher met with the teacher whose class time would be used to conduct the study. Once per week, the Arts and Music teacher would give up the Play Time on the weekly class schedule for the drama activities.

2.5.2 Sample

The core participants of this study were pupils: all of them approximately at the age of 8 (7 minimum to 9 maximum), and attending the second grade of primary school. Two classes participated in the study; each class had 26 pupils from which in class A 18 participated throughout the whole programme and 16 in class B. The group was mixed in terms of sex and LD/non-LD pupils, while the number of pupils with LDs was around one third of all participating pupils (11 in number); their learning process inhibitions varied from Autism (2 pupils), to possibly ADHD (2) and the rest (7) possibly with social skill deficiencies and low self-esteem oriented behaviours. The word “possibly” is used because that condition/characterization of those nine pupils was not medically verified like in the case of the 2 with Autism, it was rather their main teacher’s point of view, who has been daily in class with them for the past two years.

From those 11 participants, 7 were the ones that attracted the researcher’s attention and focus during the meetings and that their names are used in Chapter 4:

Table 1: Participants and Inhibitors

Pupil’s Pseudonym	Learning Process Inhibitors
Nikolas	Autism
Alexandra	Autism
Ioli	Social Skills and Self-Esteem Deficits
Shy Boy	Social Skills and Self-Esteem Deficits
David	ADHD and/or Self-Esteem Deficits
Nikos	Social Skills and Self-Esteem Deficits
Dimitris	ADHD and/or Social skills and Self-Esteem Deficits

The children were very supportive to the idea of game-oriented activities and each time, most of them, greeted the researcher warmly and asked many questions on what new activity/game they would occupy themselves with during the next hour. It has to be mentioned here that a very important reason for their warm welcome was not only the concept that they would be requested to play and have fun altogether, but also the fact that the classroom where the research was conducted was a big bright room with mirrors and polished floor, usually used by the afterschool's Art-Ballet classes and/or gymnastics taking place right after the key curriculum subjects. It was the perfect setting both for the study and for them because it boasted the idea of doing something different than a lesson, being in a spacious, empty room full of possibilities of playing and creating fun situations. The downside of this situation was that when they were distracted, it was not easy to put them back into the activities, since that was not an environment where they were used to be disciplined in their school day.

Only a few of these children did not actually participate in the research, due to their parents' decision, although they themselves wanted to join with the rest every time.

For the current research one case study of a group of pupil-participants was conducted instead of various individual cases. The main reason behind this decision was that since the concept of the research is to see how the LD children would socialize through the activities during the time of the study, it had to be a collective and group procedure that would allow the researcher to view the findings on a larger scale. Secondly, since the study took place within the classroom and the school, where the participants were spending the longest part of their day, it would be unethical to put a mark of difference on them and make them possible targets for teasing or even bullying.

2.5.3 Timeframe

The research was scheduled to take place over a period of nine weekly meetings, one for each of the two classes that the researcher requested to work with. Both classes followed the same order of the weekly schedule, with minor changes according to

children's participation, or because of canceling the meeting (twice for both classes) since the school had organized visits to museums and other field activities for the children at the end of the year. The timeline of the meetings initially was as follows below:

Table 2: Timeline of the research

Unofficial meeting with teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduction of the research. -Administration of lists with the names of the children in each class. -Unofficial discussion over which children to include in the research. -Handing out permission forms to participate in the study.
Week 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Familiarization with the researcher and vice versa. -Introductory activities. -Observation of their social behaviour (towards their peers and the researcher). -Observation of their personal views and preferences.
Week 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Individual performance in front of a group of peers and the researcher. -Observation of whether they feel comfortable acting alone in front of a group of people before and after the comments of the researcher and their peers.

-Enhancement of their self-esteem through positive comments.
Week 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group performances (minimum 4 persons per team). -Initial observation of team compositions (which children are closer). -Observation and handling of social interactions between them, whenever tension builds up. -Introduction on respecting and accepting the other person's beliefs and opinions and chain of hierarchy.
Week 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group performances (2 persons per team). -Observation of selected teams. -Observation of performance and handling of social situations in front of the group, but with the company of the best/closest friend this time. -Introduction of alternative and extended possible team and solo action on stage through the comments of the researcher or peers.
Week 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group performance (2 persons per team). -Second observation of team compilation (changes or not to the teams of the previous meeting). -Observation of the interaction between the other person of the team and the peers

(how freely they act and also how they handle and respond towards the “peer pressure” on what they did and how, whether it was good/right or the opposite.)
Week 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group / individual performance. -Observation of whether the children will ask to perform in teams or solo. -Observation of differences on their overall behaviour while on stage in front of their peers and the researcher.
Week 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group activity. -Observation of social interaction and handling (respecting what the children before added on the story we create). -Observation over how easily each individual expresses their thoughts and feelings publicly. -Official interview with the teacher of class A.
Week 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group performance (the whole class). -Observation of whether the children enhance and evolve in action what we created in theory last time, by adding and expressing pieces and ideas at the spot with or without hesitation. -Observation of how the rest of the class receives these changes and re-act either as

<p>team or individually.</p> <p>-Official interview with teacher of class B.</p>
<p>Week 9</p>
<p>-Group activity (4 groups: 2 boys, 2 girls)</p> <p>-Observation of which peers they choose to sit and work with and what they create together.</p> <p>-Interview with each child over whether they enjoyed the activities and if they believed that these would help them to make acquaintances easier.</p>

With the before mentioned two Field Activity days, the number of these meetings was reduced to seven (7). None of the activities scheduled was lost though; the researcher attempted and managed to merge the activities of the lost meeting with the activities of the previous or the next one.

All these activities aimed to make the children open themselves to their peers and reduce the amount of stress they might feel towards spectators of their actions. On a second and deeper level, the aim was oriented to augment their self-esteem through positive comments rewarding their actions, thus creating possible observable positive changes on their behaviour and way of thinking and acting towards their peers and teachers.

2.6 Ethics

A key concern for the researcher was that all data collected would be used in the study anonymously, with no connection to the participant or their family and they would remain confidential, that is not made public in any way, at least with reference to particular children.

Furthermore, a consent form, was created (see Appendix 2: Consent Form, p. 147) where all the above were plainly stated, alongside the freedom of the children to step away from the procedure if they or their parents/guardians desired so, allowing them to request the destruction of the data that they provided, something that happened in a few cases (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The parents/legal guardians of the children had to sign that form, thus allowing their children to participate in the research. In the form it was also mentioned that the meetings would be audio-recorded, and that data would be kept safe from access from anyone but the researcher and his College supervisor. Both anonymity and confidentiality were assured. With regards the latter, the researcher did not make use of the participants' real names; a system of name-coding was mostly used based on the most dominant characteristic of their physical appearance (i.e. color of hair, color of clothes etc) or attitudes (i.e. bold character, shyness etc) during the composition of this study. Before completing it, for further secure-proofing over the anonymity factor, he changed even those names in a random manner.

Whenever the teacher was not in the classroom with the researcher, another substitute was chosen so the children would have a familiar person that would deal with any problematic behaviour; another reason for this individual's presence was so that the children would not be left alone with an unfamiliar (out-of-school) adult.

After the start of the programme and during each individual meeting, the researcher used an audio recorder to keep track of the meetings' flow of action and to keep track of his thoughts on the participants' behaviour after the class was dismissed. Field notes were tried to be kept in written form at the start, but since there was no help from the teacher on this matter, as a second observer, and the researcher had to take a more active role during the activities, this plan was merged with the recording procedure. That method was followed up by the "recording observations" theory mentioned earlier (Cohen et al., 2007). All these records and personal notes recorded during the day were later transcribed and typed into documents allowing the researcher to maintain what happened during the meeting, ready to be analyzed at a later date, or destroyed if requested, as it was mentioned.

Another principal ethical aim was the unification of the group through the spirit of cooperation and teamwork. Everyone had to work together and take care of each other if needed, showing respect and understanding. Initially, a pleasant environment of trustworthiness was created, where fun would be achieved for the children while allowing safe access to data for the researcher through group – keeping an eye on the class as a whole - or individual observation. Everyone had to respect the rules of the class, the school's, as well as individual autonomy and will, treating every team member equally and equitably, avoiding and helping in case of harm or injuries.

Summary

In the first Chapter of the Thesis we saw that DiE offers children with LD a way to gain better self-understanding, by increasing their interpersonal social skills and improving their self-esteem. It was supported that eventually, through the group oriented activities that DiE offers, the participants will realize that growth and will start to act differently than before, re-adjusting their behaviour and actions according to their new thoughts and feelings of their Self. To observe that effect and to achieve that aim, this researcher adopted research methodologies and approaches specialized on the observation of the Particular phenomenon, in depth and in detail.

The ethnographic case study approach (Stenhouse, 1988) was deemed to be the most appropriate one towards the achievement of this goal since it both offers and requires of the researcher an in-depth understanding and observation of situations, social connections, perspectives and inner feelings of the participants of the study. The data was collected through lengthy and detailed field notes that were transcribed shortly after their collection, and validated through interviews with the class's main teachers.

The sample was constituted by a mixed ability group to avoid social ostracism and stigmatism for the LD participants by their non-LD peers; the LD group is presented later in the Thesis through codenames, to maintain their anonymity and the confidentiality of the whole procedure. All the pupils that had the permission of their parents and/or legal

guardians participated in the nine (9) week length timeframe of activities, shortened down to seven (7) as mentioned earlier. All the activities were targeted on enhancing their feeling of self-worth, towards a gradual increase in their self-esteem, alongside their interpersonal social skills, entertaining themselves by having fun with their peers and friends while doing so.

Both the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1 and the Methodology discussed in Chapter 2, guided the Data Analysis of the Study and particularly led to the creation of seven (7) codes through which the data analysis procedure began. That coding-interpreting system constitutes the bridge between the theory and methodology of the study and the analysis of its outcomes.

Chapter 3

Analysis of the findings

3.1 Introduction: Codes of the Analysis

After collection and transcription of the data, different types of behaviour were pinpointed, after consistently and repeatedly making their appearance as codes in the transcripts. Using as base for the analysis of the data collected the grounded theory, this researcher utilized coding based both on internal and external social and emotional/psychological cues, provided by the pupils both verbally and visually through each meeting's data. There are seven main codes, as presented in Table 3 that will be used in this chapter to analyze the classroom's observational data, with each one of them comprising of up to five observable behaviours during the classroom activities.

Table 3: Codes and Behaviours of Data Analysis

Code	Behaviour
1. Compliance to and understanding of class/game time rules and suggestions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raises arm to answer or show interest to participate• (Constant) eye contact.• Waits patiently for his/her turn.• Nodding.• Displays appropriate behaviour overall (does not make a fuss during the class (running around, yelling etc)).
2. Indifference to the class/game time rules and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not raise arm to show interest in participating, rather runs around and makes a fuss (running, poking others, not listening to the teacher or the researcher asking to stop etc.).

suggestions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forces his/her way into the action.
3. Ease in Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to get every opportunity to gain the floor and talk with/towards the researcher or his/ her peers. • Approaches the researcher and peers (tries to have body or eye contact to gain the attention).
4. Difficulty in Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not talk either with the researcher or peers during the meeting. • Averts eyes during eye contact. • Does not answer to questions or exhortations. • Does not show willingness to participate and gives excuses for not doing so.
5. Teaming up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaching peers or researcher. • Talking with them, exchanging ideas. • Accepts role in the team.
6. Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns away from researcher and peers. • Does not open himself/herself to talk.
7. Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks for further clarifications and/or details. • Suggests/enriches the idea given. • Short exposure / long exposure to the activity. • Silent / Verbal. • Vague / Detailed.

The final code of the analysis is named “Participation” and it is a universal category containing widespread details and characteristics of all the individual categories above, connecting with each code tightly. It is the ultimate goal of the current research and, at the same time, the key component and term around which the researcher based his whole programme, trying to evolve both children’s self-esteem from a negative state towards a more positive one so they would be able to advance a step further with their social skills, and the other way around.

The above patterns were divided into two broad thematic categories: positive behaviour and negative behaviour oriented. These two categories, as the researcher continued to analyze the data, were further sub-coded into three pairs of social cues:

Table 4: Codes of Data Analysis

<u>Positive</u>		<u>Negative</u>	
1a	Ease in Communication	1b	Difficulty in Communication
2a	Teaming Up	2b	Isolation
3a	Compliance with class’s rules	3b	Indifference over class’s rules
4 Participation			

These codes depict *what* is happening within the classroom as children’s behaviour and the impacts of these were noted and described in-depth. On a second level, the focus of the researcher’s attention is tuned into *how* that happened and what the cues were that encouraged the researcher focus on that particular occasion, or person, or team and how the situation evolved and unraveled. The self-esteem of the children seemed to lead them backwards and forwards between the positive and the negative behavioural pattern, depending on their personality and the current situation examined.

Through these codes, some conclusions regarding the children's self-esteem and social skills could be reached as these two theoretical pylons of the study and focus of the *research questions* seemed to be strongly interrelated with each of the three pairs of codes and of course with the main code of *participation*. Through the analysis of these seven codes, the researcher aimed to explore children's skills of handling social situations and interactions, both towards himself and their peers, and at the same time witness how these actions (or the absence of them) mirrored their feelings of self-worth.

After all the data was examined through this coding system and the data relevant with the research questions was identified, the researcher took the final step of re-examining it. This time he was looking for clues that the children started participating progressively more on the activities, which would provide some indication that the intervention through drama activities and techniques was a success.

3.2 Processes of analyzing the data using the seven codes

The researcher followed a particular procedure in his work with the children, particularly those that seemed to be lacking in social skills or self-esteem. An initial step was to help any participant who was indifferent or isolated to break through a negative aligned behaviour and progressively make his or her way towards a more positively-aligned one as it was mentioned earlier in this study that can be achieved, on the Methodology chapter, especially referring to the SE of an individual (Burke & Stets 1999 in Cast & Burke 2002). This was achieved over the whole duration of the meetings, often - and interestingly enough - with assistance from the participant's peers. As the study proceeded, and as is evidenced through the in-depth and detailed description of the Meetings below, there was observable movement from one form of behaviour (negative) to the other (positive).

More specifically this chapter will focus at the following interrelated codes, always categorised as two types of behaviour, the Positive and the Negative. For the Communication code, on the Positive side belongs every single attempt of the

individuals to communicate verbally or with body language with their peers and the researcher – i.e. every time one child would approach the researcher to ask for clarifications or make a comment or when trying to solve a problem with a friend of his/hers, this situation points towards a high enough self-esteem and social skills level to handle the current situation alone. On the other side, staying away from the rest of the group and avoiding any verbal exchange of words or even eye contact, is considered to be on the Negative side of the Communication code.

This axis strongly related during the analysis to the code of “Teaming Up” or being “Isolated” during the activities. Without being present and/or active into a group, or at least in pair with a friend, the children usually would end up alone, sitting by the window, looking outside. Thus, any attempt to rekindle their interest through their peer’s requests or the researcher’s was harder to be achieved. When this “barrier” was overcome, it was easier for the researcher to gain access to the pre-mentioned phase of communication and the one after that, the outcome of understanding, enhancing and evolving the theatrical procedure/game they were dealing with.

A pre-requisite however to both the above axes is the axis of “Compliance/Indifference over Rules”, as the children’s willingness to accept the rules of each activity seems to be the key towards any behavioural outcome. After the self-isolating phase, if and whenever that happened during the meetings, the children would either stay away from the group and seem indifferent to the activities, with a small chance of returning to the group and at least participating through silent and rule-respecting observation, or start making a fuss and noise by running around the room, abusing the fact that the researcher and the teacher could not pay attention to all of them at the same time in a big room that was not the original classroom. When approached to be confronted about this behaviour though, they would either show guilt and return to the group or self-isolate themselves and start anew the same circle of behaviour.

The activities and processes evolved throughout data collection, as the researcher kept them open and flexible to changes as new and different situations arose during the activities. When something of interest was observed, he immediately headed over

towards the children initiating the particular situation and either engaged in talking with them or stood still observing their actions and re-actions towards their peers. All the emotions and thoughts expressed through their speech and movements are used as raw data material in this chapter to identify the procedures that they followed to overcome any obstacles as they moved from one stage (negative) to the other (positive). One example of a researcher-led intervention was when one of the boys did not want to participate in a two-man show on stage, but after the researcher asked kindly and his best friend exhorted him to do it and gave an idea on what they could perform on together, the boy started talking and his attention over the activities was increased. His behaviour shifted from being withdrawn and indifferent towards working as part of a team and seemingly enjoying the activity.

The researcher had in mind and under careful observation a number of pupils that the teachers of the class had already confirmed to be prone to LD, or at least suspected them to be. Other children were also observed; while these did not have LD as such, their behaviours and actions seemed to lead to similar behaviours with their peers who were diagnosed with LD.

3.3 Description of the analysis

In this section of the study the researcher is going to present the raw data collected. There were eight (8) meetings with the participants of the study but unfortunately two (2) of them were cancelled because of school activities such as “Museum Visit Day” or “Nature Walk Day”. The researcher managed to squeeze the activities lost into subsequent meetings though, so they would not be lost completely from the study’s curriculum. Because of that fact, and by willing to make it easier for the reader to follow up on each meeting’s agenda without confusion, all the analysis and presentation of the data below is presented not only in chronological order of the meetings, but also in accordance to the meeting it is directly linked to.

Self-questioned whether or not this is correct and ethical in terms of the data analysis and for the completion of the chapter, the researcher can only answer that he believes it would be virtually and practically very confusing for the reader to follow the study's progress-flow through each individual meeting if there were cross-indexes to be found backwards and forwards to other sub-sections, so a complete image of each meeting's data collection and outcome would be finally acquired. That realization came when he had himself a hard time following up the data he collected during the first drafts of the analysis's chapter, where a very strict chronological order was kept. Thus the decision was made to keep the chronological evolution order and just add the pieces needed to the right place to complete the picture.

The first aspect to be encountered in each individual meeting analysis is a box that gives a brief description over the activities that the researcher (or even the children on a few occasions) introduced and took place in the classroom during that day. Additionally there is further explanation of the "on-the-spot" changes (if any) that the researcher had to make on these chosen activities, when the children began losing interest and/or they seemed to evolve in a different way than was planned. The third element is a short reasoning behind the thought procedure that the researcher had in mind while deciding to make those changes. Finally, there is a reference to the Codes of the Data Analysis that are encountered during the specific segment of analysis.

After each box, the researcher presents in chronological order the key elements and incidents during each lesson. There is only a short parenthesis at the very start where he introduces the most interesting and characteristic event of that day's meeting. That approach is chosen because, in a way, that particular event or colloquy was the core event around which the day evolved and/or presented a huge change in the behaviour of an individual child or group of children.

The grounded theory approach of the data analysis was followed on the code section since all the codes' concepts were originated from and grounded within the data collected. The bibliography of this study gave to the researcher a baseline to develop his codes of analysis for the study but it was the processing of the particular behaviours

and speech practices of the children that dictated most of the codes that were finally developed.

The codes above were obtained through the process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization of the data. The raw data was separated from the original setting it was collected from and codes were assigned to each segment of data that appeared both as a major-common theme as well as a minor-uncommon one. Afterwards, all of them were categorized under core codes, covering all the major common cases encountered during the previous process (Starks & Trinidad 2007).

3.4 The Meetings

3.4.1 The 1ST Meeting

Box 1: Activities during the 1st Meeting

Activity 1: “Getting to know each other”

“During this initial activity, we sat around in a circle and with the use of a bouncing ball that we threw to whoever we wanted to speak, we introduced ourselves and shared something about us, our name, what we liked or disliked.”

The target of this activity was to create an atmosphere of fun while the children and the researcher had their first encounter, and for the researcher to form an initial idea over which of them were more sociable and eager to communicate.

Activity 2: “Imaginary World”

“Sitting around in a circle (or lying down if that is preferred by the children, to relax easier) we listen to some relaxing nature sounds for a few minutes (the song of birds by a stream and the sound of wind rustling in the leaves of trees) and try to create in our heads a picture of what we hear. Then, one by one going clockwise, and maintaining

our positions, we are requested to tell what we imagined, in as much detail as we want.”

The target of the second activity was to discern which children were more welcoming to the idea of interaction with the researcher, so they would act as credible helpers during the study and as a catalyst of change in case other children, less social and less open to new experiences, needed a push or someone to open up to and relax with.

Activity 3: “Let’s Dance, like Statues”

“We are requested to spread around the room in couples or individually. When the music starts, we should “dance”, either doing dancing moves we like or by representing things we already told that we liked while sitting in the circle at the start or the first thing that comes in our mind. When the music stops, we should stay still, like statues and whoever the researcher touches on the shoulder he/she will “unfreeze” and explain to the rest what he/she is doing. When the music continues we are allowed to move and dance again.”

The target of the last activity was to check whether or not the children will prefer playing individually or in small teams, both to have an idea on what the class prefers as a whole and what many of them prefer as individuals.

Changes in activities: None

Reasons for change: None

Codes encountered during this meeting:

- Ease in Communication.
- Difficulty in Communication.
- Teaming Up.
- Compliance with the class rules and game suggestions.

Having completed the first activity, the researcher observed that most of the children had no problem at all in *Communicating*, expressing what they liked in lengthy sentences such as:

Anastasia – *My favorite food are lentils and my favorite sport gymnastics*

Boy – *My favorite sport is football and the...I forgot it...ah, and I like aubergines.*

The only exception to those long sentences was when children were asked to also include their name in their answers. Then they were either referring only to one of the things that they might like and their answers were very similar to the one above, but most of them were still engaged in the initial activity and being rowdy as to who should get the ball next:

Evelina – *My name is Evelina and I like Voley(ball).*

George – *My name is George and I like souvlaki!*

Boy – *To me!*

Girl – *To Thanasis!*

John – *To Dimitris, to (=so that we all) have some fun.*

While eagerness to participate seemed an important element while analyzing the data, another point that the researcher observed was that, when responding, some of the children seemed more distant and avoided attention from their peers. Those children simply held the ball and gave shorter answers in length, avoiding making interpersonal *Communication* openings:

Girl – *My favorite food is pastichio.*

Staurianna – *My favorite food is pastichio.*

Boy – *...I like football.*

Another child introduced himself and stated one thing that he liked or enjoyed doing, amidst the yelling and fuss that was present in the room at some point, but he refused

to repeat it, while the researcher managed to tune down the noise, by throwing the ball randomly to a girl and averting his eyes from the circle we had made on the floor.

These responses, apart from being short (or even non-existent in the last case) share one more feature: these children avoided saying their name and mentioned things or activities that had just been referred to by their classmates.(e.g. *pastichio*, *football*, *rhythmic gymnastics* being the most common). While this seemed an initial indication of low-self-esteem or social skills, the researcher simply kept these observed behaviours in mind for the forthcoming meetings, to be confirmed through observation, and for the time being he allowed those children some space.

During the second activity, it became more transparent which of the children were eager and willing to participate as individuals, having a more fiery temper that would be used to kindle others to mimic them at the activities and meetings to follow. The majority of the class was just making plain references of what they were hearing on the speakers (the birds, the murmur of the water etc.):

David – *It's a river and the water is flowing and a tree with birds.*

Girl – *I think of a tree with small birds (on it) singing and in the middle a stream.*

Girl – *I am in a forest with a stream and there are trees with birds (on them).*

A few children were more eager to add details, thoroughly and excitedly explaining what they had in their head as the picture of the imaginary place the researcher presented to them:

Boy – *I am in a forest and there is a stream flowing nearby and (as) I listen to it there are small birds coming and standing around me.*

Nikolas – *...[inaudible] a big tree...[inaudible] and I sit and meditate.*

Girl – *I imagine that I am at my cottage and there is a waterfall, a tree and small birds.*

Boy – *I imagine a small river and two swallows that sing.*

Girl – *I imagine a river full (=around) with poppies and butterflies!*

Keeping their excited faces in mind, while they were describing their imaginary setting showing their willingness to *Participate* in this new activity, the researcher made a mental note of keeping those children as his “helpers of positive attitude and imagination”, when some of the other children would express unwillingness to participate for any reason. Subsequently, this activity revealed to the researcher which of the children participating were capable of *Respecting the classroom’s rules* without making a fuss and ignoring the teacher’s remarks, the researcher and their peers by standing up and running around, disrupting the course of the lesson.

Finally, the last activity involved picking one or more partners or acting solo, to represent something that the children like. Before getting into that last part of the meeting though, there was a small interesting incident right as the researcher announced that there was another activity before the end of the time together for the day. One of the children that the main teacher of the class has identified as one with LD and most probably under the Autism spectrum, a girl who was delayed one year in her education, re-approached the researcher –because up until that point she was standing right by him, the whole time, paying attention to what he was saying and doing- and had the following conversation with him:

Alexandra – *I want to, I want to say what game we play!*

Researcher – *Shall we do first one that I have brought and prepared? Dancing with...*

Alexandra – *(Talking in a playful manner, face down but eyes looking upwards) I can’t dance...But I know a nice game...*

That behaviour was totally unexpected from her part. The teacher had prepared the researcher for her being a self-isolated and peer-isolated pupil closed towards the outside world, hardly ever reaching out to open up. Especially towards a new adult in the classroom, that the majority of the children saw as a new teacher – since the researcher was introduced as the friend of the teacher, to help maintain the image of someone with authority over possible misbehaviour – the girl’s playful behaviour was something completely new and positive, as the teacher told the researcher during an off-the-record conversation later.

The girl was annoyed for the group not following what she wanted to play, and ended up sitting alone by the door for the last 10 minutes of the meeting, looking outside; the rest of the children were excited with the activity and quickly formed small teams and pairs. This researcher noticed that the boys were forming bigger teams than the girls (with 4 or even up to 8 persons), mostly doing body-oriented sketches, while even the shy ones were participating with a big smile on their face:

Boy – *We are playing football!*

Boy – *Goalkeeper!*

(or:)

Boy – *We play the Spider!*

Boy – *I play the guitar.*

Boy – *I am kneeled.*

The girls were mostly forming teams of up to 3 participants. Some of their perspectives, over what they could do as a team, were very interesting and imaginative. They had many requests and were trying to get the researcher's attention by raising their arms or waving:

Girl – *Sir, come to see us first because what we will do...[inaudible]...and we can't keep it for long.*

(And as soon as the music stopped and the researcher stepped by them):

Girl – *We are doing the flower. (they said while they were performing a minor acrobatic trick where each of the 3 girls in their team was balancing the other 2 over a mattress, back arching backwards, hardly keeping themselves from laughing)*

Girl – *We are reading a newspaper on a bench! (6 of them trying to do the exact same movements, synchronized)*

In the end, that first introductory meeting was quite promising and profitable through the observation of the balance of the children's groups and their eagerness over Participation in the activities with their new "teacher", as well as towards the observation

over which of them were more communicative than the rest and which preferred the safety of their own worlds. Overall, the researcher received some confirmation over the issues he had discussed with the teachers and a first indication of what the children preferred for the activities (team games or more individually-oriented ones). Also, a picture of class-rule compliance or indifference from the children towards the researcher was provided, pinpointing possible “threats” of the procedure and “little helpers” that would put everyone back in order or even help push the ones having a “bad day” towards a more pleasant and enjoyable outlook.

3.4.2 The 2ND Meeting

Box 2: Activities during the 2nd Meeting

Activity: “Pantomime with two objects”

“We sit in a circle so everyone will focus on the middle spot where the action would take place, while keeping an eye on the rest of our peers and friends. One by one, we ask permission to stand up and participate in a game of pantomime, using either an empty file or a ball to perform and express whatever we might have in our mind.”

The goal of this activity was to observe whether or not the children feel comfortable acting alone in front of a group of people, before and after the comments of the researcher and their peers, while enhancing their self-esteem through the use of positive comments. This way there was also a positive example provided to the children that were not eager to participate in the game, over what to expect in case they decided to play with us.

Changes in activities:

The only change in this particular game was that half way into the meeting, the researcher noticed that the children were getting more eager and excited to turn this into a group game than acting individually on stage.

Reasons for change:

Mostly because they were starting to lose interest and a few of them started making a fuss, he let them form teams of up to five persons to continue.

Codes encountered during this meeting:

- Indifference with the class and game rules.
- Ease in Communication.
- Difficulty in Communication
- Isolation.
- Teaming up.
- Participation.

The researcher had a very interesting incident before the start of the class, right as the bell rung and while he was walking towards the classroom to take the children and go to the activity room. Three of them -a boy and two girls- run out and hugged his legs tightly. Most of them had already seen the researcher approaching, during their break and one of the boys that he encountered said:

Boy – *Ah, we will have class with Mr. Miltos today, how nice!*

It was absolutely heartwarming to see the children react like this and moreover this reaction made it clear that, at least for the children that had seen him and the ones hugging his legs now, enjoyed the activities.

The children seemed excited over the idea of pantomime, but none was eager enough to stand up alone, in front of its peers, the researchers and the teacher in order to act. Thus, both the researcher and the teacher decided to make some small funny examples

of pantomime. The researcher made the impression of an old wizard that found a magic book on the ground and after reading a spell inside he was transformed into a hopping rabbit and right after he made the impression of a robot trying unsuccessfully to play basketball. The teacher used the ball as “an uncomfortable pillow to sleep on”.

All children seemed to enjoy both sketches quite a lot. Laughing was echoing in the empty room and the circle was getting smaller and smaller, as they were getting closer to each other and the two adults in the middle. Everyone seemed excited with these ideas and the researcher noticed many heads nodding and children constantly talking with each other, re-thinking what they already had in mind. Even the shy ones and the ones that were under the LD umbrella, were talking and exchanging ideas in a very fast rate, momentarily – at least – putting aside their discomfort over communication and peer reaction.

As a direct result of breaking the ice between the on-stage people and the audience below, there was a volunteer who excitedly raised his arm. Since he seemed so eager and was following the rules, not just jumping to stand up without permission as some others, the researcher allowed him to stand up and act. George took the ball and put it in the middle and started imitating someone who failed to kick it, over and over again. Each time, there was a different way or angle from which he tried and with each laugh coming from his audience, his eagerness increased during his silent sketch. In the end, the researcher had to stop him so someone else would take his place and try to perform.

The interesting part was right after the researcher and the teacher performed. The two siblings with LD and probably under the Autism spectrum, Nikos and Alexandra, both of which were always slightly distant regarding the activities, decided to join in. Both stayed close to the researcher, demanding his attention and, interestingly enough, talking with him.

Alexandra – Can I do now? Can I?

Finally Alexandra stood up without permission and ignoring the rest of the children that were complaining over her taking their place, she grabbed the file and started going around the circle. As it proved out, she was imitating the researcher's pantomime with the rabbit:

Alexandra – It was a lady that found a magic book and transformed into a horse!

Her eyes were sparkling behind the glasses and with a huge smile on her face she moved away, going to sit by the window to look at another class outside, having gymnastics. After the meeting and while the researcher was leaving the school, she spotted him on the road outside and said that she really enjoyed both this meeting and the previous one.

Almost the same thing happened with Nikolas who usually tried to be around the researcher, trying to get his attention by trying not to get it: while the researcher was talking or looking someone else, the boy was looking directly at him and/or was moving around in circles on the floor trying to catch other children's hands or legs that were passing by; but while the researcher was looking at him he was actually trying to behave properly, according to the class-rules, although avoiding looking at him directly. The main teacher of the class had talked to the researcher about this boy, thinking that it might be under the autism spectrum.

Nikolas, like his sister, just jumped to the center of the circle and eagerly grabbed the ball, ignoring the complaints over bypassing the children waiting patiently to stand up. He imitated what his teacher did, trying to sleep on the ball-pillow but he added that "something" was bothering and annoying him while he was sleeping. David actually tried to poke him with his fingers while Nikolas was "spinning" to get comfortable, so the short sketch ended with Nikolas throwing the pillow-ball on David.

Nikolas - It was a man who slept and...(inaudible-laughs) annoyed...(inaudible) the ball.

He baby-crawled back into his position, right next to the researcher, with a smile on his face and then he turned his back on the circle and followed his sister's example.

Both these pupils showed the class and the researcher that when they want something they get it, even if their way ignores the rules of the game. The most admirable thing though was the unbridled passion in their eyes while on the small stage and the satisfaction afterwards that caught the researcher's attention. Both these siblings were capable of a huge change, if they had the attention and will to participate. This was duly noted after the meeting.

Without waiting for the researcher to give him the final approval, David crawled in the circle and took the file in his hands. While everyone was trying to tell him to get out of the circle because it was not actually his turn, he kept on ignoring them and squatted on the floor "reading" things inside the file, dodging hands that were trying to get him to go back into his place. After a while, when he realized that the researcher was looking at him with interest, he turned and told him directly, ignoring the rest of the children:

David - I am reading and someone is bothering me.

Then his face smiled, he dropped the file and rushed back to his place, listening to "bravo" from most of the boys and "was not your turn" from most of the girls. The rest of the sketches, before the change towards the group activity, were not as interesting in terms of the choice of subject basketball, football and other sports mostly, but a few were more unique:

Athena – (while walking up and down in a line, holding the file, "locking" a door and kicking a ball, over and over again, like a deja-vu experience) It was a man that goes in and out the door and sees a ball, thinking that he had locked the door, but also thinking he didn't lock because the ball was returning all the time in front of him.

Girl – (opens the envelope and faints) I opened the envelope with the electricity bill and I saw it was 1000 euros.

Boy – (Reads from the envelope on a "podium") I Samaras who yells at Tsipras! (political leaders of ruling and opposition parties)

Girl – (crawling on the floor, keeping the envelope ahead of her) The turtle and the envelope! The envelope wins the race!

But most children seemed more eager to look at the people on the stage instead of getting up all by themselves. Realizing that the researcher shifted the rule for individual acting on stage to group oriented performances, the children responded by immediately forming Teams and deciding on what subject to present in mere seconds. There was not a huge difference in those themes compared to the ones picked before: most of them were based around sports or tiny animals. The notable part though came from the children's observed social interaction. It was as if suddenly someone lifted the veil of the on-stage shame off of them. It was like it did not matter to them how long they would stay up, in front of their peer's eyes and the researcher's. In fact he had to repeatedly ask many of the teams to sit down and let the next one take their place. Even the more introvert children formed teams with other introvert ones and played - not in the center of the circle though, since they preferred to act on the side, while only a few eyes were on them. They did their part with a big smile on their face though and many-many laughs and pokes from and towards their friends, leaving aside their silent and shy self. Only one child was still too shy to participate, a small, sensitive girl who approached the researcher to inform him plainly and in a very short sentence that she and her friend:

Ioli – We don't want to play Mr. Miltos...

After being told that it is fine if they are not in the mood to play, and that they do not have to force themselves, both girls went by the door and started talking, looking outside at another class doing gymnastics.

At the same time, the researcher asked the rest of the children, while they were getting in line to get out of the classroom, the following question:

Researcher – Did you like this activity?

All of them exclaimed a thunderous "Yes", apart from a boy who wanted to make a difference and between laughs and smirking claimed a loud "No!" as his answer. That plain answer, combined with their reaction before the start of the class and their behaviour during the activity, gave the researcher a clear sign that the children were really enjoying these meetings. That was one of the basic targets of the researcher for

the first meetings of the study, since gaining their trust and interest is the main way to make even the most introvert ones open up to new experiences and behaviours, slowly but steadily achieving higher goals with regards their social skills and self-esteem through their Participation in the drama activities. What was not desired though and had to be kept under control was the fact of ignoring the classroom's rules and line of priority, although in the most serious cases of Nikolas and Alexandra that fact worked towards their own benefit.

3.4.3 The 3RD Meeting

Box 3: Activities during the 3rd Meeting

Activity: "The Leader"

"We divide in groups of up to 5 people. Each team should decide on a single topic (firefighters, butterflies, dancers etc), by discussing our likes and dislikes, and inform the researcher after we have reached a unanimous choice. The next step was for the researcher to randomly choose one of the children of the group to perform as the Leader. This person would be responsible for all the decisions made (who, how, when etc) on how to perform on our common subject picked."

With this activity the researcher aimed to investigate whether and how the team compilations, that the children seemed to prefer so far, were functioning in terms of social interaction and handling their social skills. Also, with the possibility of discord quite strong, as in all human interactions, it was a fertile field to plant the ideas of respect and accepting another person's beliefs and the chain of hierarchy in groups.

Changes in activities:

The researcher changed the "random" factor of the team's leader choice by directly picking them as leaders of the group. He masked this willingly made decision and outcome by rhyming kid's "tag" lines in front of them, such as: "Eeny, meeny, miny,

moe”.

Reasons for change:

The main change in the activity came when the researcher realized that, luckily, each team compilation included at least one child that was moderately or quite introvert in its behaviour, at least up until this point of the weekly meetings.

Codes encountered during this meeting:

- Indifference with the class and game rules.
- Ease in Communication.
- Teaming Up.
- Isolation.
- Participation.

The team bonds were under pressure for a few children during this meeting. While most of the teams actually worked together in harmony, picking and producing very interesting topics, the rest had problems like the one mentioned below. There were mainly complains about teamwork, and more precisely over team decision-making:

Staurianna – *I don't agree with my team and I don't want to do what the rest will do...*

Girl – *We don't know what to do. Staurianna wants us to be butterflies. I disagree...*

Researcher – *Think about it for a while, I can call you last. You can be a team with variety of topics...*

Girl – *Mr Miltos, the three of us have picked a topic but the rest don't want it...*

Researcher – *Can't you combine them? You could do your topic, as 3. But then I would like if you present something altogether, as five. I will leave you think about it a bit more.*

(Later) Girl – Sir, we want to play Run and the boys want Box.

Researcher – Good, why don't you do as a team the topic of Sports? This way you can do both the run and hide and the box part!

The researcher grabbed that opportunity to extensively communicate with the children and tried to show them, not tell them directly though so it would be knowledge they would achieve and realize by themselves, that there are solutions when people have differences to solve. These solutions should not always be something completely different from what each side wants and/or supports. There is a common ground where both subjects under discussion should have at least a unifying factor. For the majority of the children, realizing the existence of the common ground, this realization seemed to increase their imagination. They left the researcher's side not annoyed or irritated with their peer's behaviour, but smiling and jumping and eager to talk more over their "subject of conflict". And truly, at least for the ones that the researcher managed to observe while trying to solve the next team's issue, they were emitting their new-found enthusiasm over to their friends.

The other solution provided, and picked up by a small number of children, was to drift away from the team they had and try to find a home for their idea and creativity in another team, if that team wanted to accept them as a new member. A good example of this acceptance is the one of Alexandra, who may not have had a problem on deciding a common topic with her team, but she had a problem finding one since all the other children were not interested in teaming up with her.

Alexandra – I have nowhere to join...

Researcher – Come here, come here...Would you girls like to have our Alexandra join your team so she won't be alone? (They nodded "yes" happily.) Decide a topic that you all three like.

The opposite example was one of three girls that had decided on a topic but could not find the common ground with the boys of the team. She tried to join another team of girls. They accepted her gladly and the researcher noticed that they started talking

enthusiastically right away, but it was not even a couple of minutes later that the girl came back towards the researcher with the leader of the group right behind her and said:

Girl – Mr Miltos, they don't want me in the other team because they already have three grumpy girls and they called me a grumpy girl too!

Girl Leader – I said that we are already four Grumpy Girls (=as a topic of choice for the activity) and you can't be one too!

She was obviously and clearly annoyed, having her arms curled up on her chest and looking around with eyes half-closed. She did not look any more interested in the activity.

Researcher – Why don't you go back, on the team you had with the boys?

Girl – I can't, they are too noisy...

Truly, that was the main problem arisen during that meeting. The two boys of her original group, Nikos (not Nikolas) and Dimitris, were making an excessive amount of noise and fuss around the classroom, ignoring both classroom rules and the game's rules. They were hindering the whole procedure of the activity by running and poking the members of the other teams, provoking them to join their independent "catch me if you can" game. For both these children the researcher had been told that they tend to overthrow the class rules quite often, mainly to gain the attention of the teacher, or peers as a second choice, due to attention problems in their family circle – a fact that was neither open for discussion from the teacher's side nor wanted to be extended into from the researcher's side, without the presence and consent of the family.

That problem was not one to be dealt with easily, and it was bound to reappear in future meetings too, but at least the researcher managed to temporarily solve it by making the two boys sit on different sides of the room, alone and away from each other, thus unavailable to further participate in the activities for the day. That was quite an exemplification for the rest of the children, who looked stressed over possibly losing their game privileges for the day, thus adopting their best in-class behaviour.

The rest of the hour passed with the presentation of the work the teams had prepared in their short time and explanation, usually by the appointed Leader, of what they had showed us. A very interesting example of teamwork between boys and girls was the very first team on the stage: two boys and three girls, the girls dancing, the boys “hunting” them with finally the girls escaping. When asked to explain loud and clear to everyone what they showed us with their pantomime they said:

George – They were the Three Sisters and we were the archers in the forest and we kill them and bring them by the fire.

Girl – And we sleep and when they fall asleep we wake up and escape!

The second noteworthy team was the one composed by the children of the introductory example of the mini-chapter. Staurianna approached the researcher very sad and just stood by his side, not participating, while her team took their place on stage.

Girl – We decided for two people to be on the floor sleeping and be our owners because we will be dogs and we will go wake them up to do for a walk. But Konstantinos and Staurianna...Staurianna doesn't want to be Konstantino's owner.

Staurianna was allowed to exit the classroom at this point to regain her good spirits and together with a friend took a drink of water and returned to the classroom.

The last team that is noteworthy was a team composed of children that were usually very introvert and silent during the meetings so far, including Nikolas. One of them was standing in the middle, the others standing around and in the end one of them grabbed a ball and headed towards the one standing while, at the same time, the rest lay on the floor. As it turned out, something they all explained at the same time, they were dinosaurs around a volcano and then a meteor hit the earth and everyone died.

Nikolas - Was I a dinosaur too?

(All the boys together) - Yes you were a dino too.

Their team was the one who went further away in the room while the researcher was handling the situations previously mentioned and choosing Leaders for each team. They

were moving and jumping around like grasshoppers, talking in a very low voice, leaning into each other to avoid being heard, as if they did not want anyone else to copy their idea. Nikolas was participating but not giving his full attention. He was walking around and looking at both researcher and the other teams.

After most of teams completed their activity, and around the end of this meeting, the researcher asked the children one more time whether they liked the activity and if they preferred teamwork over individual performance. The majority answered a thunderous “Yes” with Alexandra at the forefront, saying:

Alexandra – *(Work) As a team!*

The ones that did not seem very interested in participating at that moment were the ones that seemed to have had a rough time during the topic and team choice.

Girl – *We fought in our team...*

Standing idly, frowning and annoyed, these children waited eagerly for the bell to ring to return to their home. But that lasted only momentarily because on the way back to their classroom, they were already laughing and making jokes, having their bad temper reverted by the joking and fooling around of their happier friends.

The researcher can safely say that this meeting was to an extent successful in reverting bad and negative social behaviours towards their more positive counterparts through the means of *Communication and Team-Spirit*. As presented above, most of the children were more than thrilled to solve their problems through talking and exchanging ideas after the first barrier of anger or irritation was breached. Although there were still some cases that ended up being isolated from the group, the majority teamed up with ease producing some interesting results, participating in the process and respecting the rules, especially after the example they had on the consequences if the latter were not respected.

3.4.4 The 4TH Meeting

Box 4: Activities during the 4th Meeting

Activity: “Shopkeepers / Circus Attractions”

“In groups of two, we pick between the two subjects mentioned above to act on. We are allowed to do this either with pantomime or vocally, whatever we prefer. The only rule is that we have to use the two chairs that the researcher placed in the middle of the circle, at some point during our mini show, whichever way and for whatever purpose serves us right.”

With this activity, like with the one in the previous meeting, the researcher wanted to observe the choice of companions of the children and how this differed during each class meeting. Also another major factor under observation, linked with that mentioned above, was the performance and handling of social situations in front of the group, but with the company of the best/closest friend this time. Finally, the boosting of each individual's self-esteem and broadening of their imagination was one of the main goals of this meeting, by making positive comments and explaining/making constructive criticism of their performance on stage.

Changes in activities: None

Reasons for change: None

Codes encountered during this meeting:

- Teaming up.
- Ease in Communication.
- Participation: short and long exposure.

The meeting began in much the same way as the previous ones. The pairs were selected and the children soon were performing short sketches. Everything changed after a couple of pairs performed, when two boys came up on stage and had the following conversation:

Researcher – *What did you do?*

Blonde boy with glasses – *He came and asked for a souvlaki and I gave him one and he ate it.*

David - *...and I ate it!*

Researcher – *Well, I liked it a lot. But, do you know what I would like even more? If that (chair 1) was the shop's counter and this (chair 2) was the chair where the customer would sit while you prepare the souvlaki. Wouldn't that be nicer, both making extra moves showing us...*

David – *Can we do it again?!*

Researcher – *If you want to re-do it like so, yes.*

From this point onward, standing up with their pair, acting just for a couple of seconds and then sitting down without waiting for a comment (either from the researcher or some of their peers and friends), as it happened with the very first pairs during this meeting, was not enough for the children. They came to the realization that this is a class but it is at the same time a game, free for all, and that the researcher was not there to force them to act or make them do things they would not be fond of (like standing in front of the blackboard to read a text or have a test on Maths, for example) but was there as a friend, to play and make positive comments and hand out warm smiles, as well as an adult to keep everything in order for all that wished to participate. It was like there was a sudden burst of energy in their eyes; like thoughts and feelings trapped behind the glass of uncertainty broke through and rushed into their minds. Suddenly, the whole classroom was filled with the humming of children voices, re-evaluating, re-thinking, and discussing what they had decided to do on stage.

Girl – Mr. Miltos, could one of us play two roles while the other...?

Researcher – Ah, very good! Kids, kids listen. The girls here asked me something very interesting

Girl – We have found something to do with two people but one of us will play two parts.

(They perform their topic:)

Girl – We played that we were in a pet shop and I picked that small animal and Anastasia was the owner and the animal.

This behaviour was deemed quite innovative on their part and made a great impression on the rest of the class – so much that at least three out of four of the rest of the mini-performances included an invisible extra member who was acting and reacting with the other two or, like in this case, one of the children was performing two roles. After they sat down a few of their peers, mostly girls, surrounded them and started talking with them either making positive comments or asking them their opinion on how to perform their own mini-play.

At the same time, the class made another innovation that was centerpiece to the rest of the sketches. In the middle of the upheaval of ideas and the constant humming of discussions, two of the girls came by and asked:

Agelina – Could we have a ball for our team?

Researcher – Would you like a ball? Hm...You can't do your thing without a ball? What about an Imaginary Ball?... Kids, listen up! The girls here asked me for a ball to use. Since I only want you to use these two items (the two chairs) and your imagination, I told them that if you need extra things you should make imaginary use of them, imaginary ball for example. Now, show us.

Girl – We were running outside at the yard and then we stopped and played volley and then Agelina came and...[inaudible, because the kids were making a lot of fuss over the last aspects of the game.]

The sketch that embodied all the above was made by two girls a while later. One of them sat in the chair and threw her hair backwards and the other approached with a silly walk, grabbed “the scissors” from the “tray” (chair 2) and started cutting. She gave the scissors to someone imaginary standing nearby and got something that hold and used as a hairdryer. The whole class was looking at them with an ecstatic look on their face.

Researcher – *At the hairdresser, very-very nice! What we are doing here kids might not look a lot like a game because it's mostly Theatre. Have you played in a show?*

The whole class – *Yes!*

Researcher – *Did you like it? Did you enjoy going on stage?*

The class – *Yes!*

Nikolas – *I am shy being on stage...*

Researcher – *Everyone is at the first time, even the second I would tell. I was on stage in front of a lot of people and I was extremely shy. But it was a nice feeling because on stage you can do absolutely whatever you desire, using your imagination...*

The researcher took the opportunity provided by Nikolas to talk from personal experience about the activities, trying to show the children that playing on stage is a relief to both heart and mind, channeling one's positive energy and creating something completely new each time. David took the opportunity to ask some direct and personal questions, something that made apparent one more time that this boy was not shy at all in expressing his thoughts:

David – *Did you use to play theatre as a kid?*

Researcher – *Yes, a couple of years ago and as a kid...*

David – *How old are you?*

Researcher – *How old you think I am?*

David – *(Looking at the researcher from top to bottom, momentarily losing his focus, trying to think) Twenty one?*

Researcher – *Ha ha, close. Twenty six. (David is agape, totally not believing what he just heard. Then turns to the boy with the glasses that performed with him earlier and starts talking about how young the researcher looks. Some girls behind them participate in that conversation.)*

The rest of the time was structured around the above themes. Pairs of children stood up and performed according to what others, or they themselves, requested, discovered and evolved up until that moment, with the spirit of team-working adding something new to what the previous team had achieved. There were some teams that performed more than once, most of them on an average of two times, with two of them performing as many as four times. These last two were David's and two girls', with the girls being extremely reluctant to get up at the start of the class. The researcher noticed them trying to avoid going on stage and left them alone up until the point that every other pair had performed at least once. Then he asked whether or not they would like to present something to the class, since he could see them talking and nodding about their peers'. Surprisingly enough, after their first time 'on-stage', they were asking to perform again each time another team had performed; this behaviour was conducted a pleasant and communicative manner by coming to the researcher's side and waiting to get his attention if he was looking at other children, by gently pulling his hand. They put their shyness aside quite easily while simultaneously respecting the rules both of the game and the classroom, a fact that was not observed often enough during the meetings.

Their example was followed by the shyest, most isolated and reluctant to play child in the group. He was sitting in the corner, sneaking peeks at the rest of the children while they were playing on stage, trying to avert his eyes when realizing that the researcher was looking at him, in order to avoid eye contact and thus avoid a possible request to participate. After a while though, the researcher decided to try his luck. The boy was persuaded with some gentle speaking from the researcher and once again, with the constant motivation and persuasion of a friend who was buzzing around him and laughing:

Boy – *Come on, let's go, it will be fun! Let's do what they do!*

Researcher – *Would you two like to play after the girls?*

Boy- *I am talking to him but he doesn't answer...*

Shy Boy – *We want to but we haven't thought of anything to do...*

Researcher – *If you ever think of something, come up. If not, it doesn't matter. I would just really like to see you two too...*

No more than a couple of minutes later, the two of them asked if there was enough time left for them to play something too. After they got on stage, they made a very quick sketch. What the researcher observed was remarkable: the reluctant boy was not looking very happy to have all this attention on himself, but when his friend started explaining what they did for us, amidst the noise and fuss since it was almost time for the bell to ring, his eyes lit-up and for a brief moment he looked directly at the researcher's eyes with a proud look like saying "I made it. I didn't want to but I made it!", with a smile forming on his face.

Summarizing the data so far, the researcher reached the following conclusion at this mid-point during fieldwork: with some friendly motivation and kind words, all children were willing to participate, being more carefree while doing so. What the researcher witnessed during this meeting was proof of a theory he had formed in his mind: the children might need someone or some action to put them into motion but from the moment they realize that the adult in the room and their friends are truly interested in them and what they are about to do, they let their imagination free and bloom into action.

Most children initially did not know how to react to the positive comments they received, thus their shyness returning. In retrospect, the positive comments they received and their peers' encouragement seemed to evolve their willingness to participate in their activities, a point that seemed true even for the more challenging cases of children.

3.4.5 The 5TH Meeting

Box 5: Activities during the 5th Meeting

Activity: “Clown Contest”

“In pairs, we have to make the other person laugh or at least smile. The rest of the class and the researcher would be the judges of whether or not the means that laughter was achieved were acceptable and whether or not that forced or hidden smirk was counting as a laughter/smile.”

This activity gave to the researcher another viewpoint of the team/pair compilations made during the meetings while also providing valuable data on peer interaction. He was able to observe how freely the children act and how they handle and respond towards and under peer pressure, the close observation of their classmates, over what they did and how they did it, and their judgment over whether it was good, right or their opposites.

Changes in activities:

While the researcher had in mind to expand the activities that were conducted during the previous meeting, the children had the idea of the above described game to play. They insisted quite fondly on playing that too.

Reasons for change:

From the moment this activity request made its appearance while the researcher was explaining the main activity that he had in mind for the day (expand the event horizon of the previous activity held last week), all the children became more than eager and willing to participate and they were actually trying to press the researcher into accepting their proposition; even the ones that were usually very quiet and distant. Thus, the researcher took the opportunity to see them in action and agreed on conducting their chosen activity.

Codes encountered during this meeting:

- Ease in Communication.
- Teaming Up.
- Indifference towards the class-rules.
- Participation.

During this meeting's time the most prominent code of behaviour to observe was *Indifference towards the class rules*, with the manifestation of courage and willingness of some of the most self-isolated children to team up and participate, with their own terms though, closely following.

The hour started with the researcher explaining what he had in mind for today, and with the children as a whole turning down the idea openly giving their own preferences and pressing on what *they* would prefer to do.

Giannis – *Mr. Miltos, you should put us in a pair of chairs and each could do jokes and the other person should try not to laugh!*

Girl – *Mr. Miltos, we should play that one with the chairs.*

Dimitris – *Mr. Miltos you should make us play the one with the General. All the children should get in a line and when he says "put us your arm" we should not do it, or else the one who does loses and when he says "the general says to pull up your leg" we should do it. It is a good game!*

Alexandra – *Me, I want to do that!*

It is plainly visible here that many children had become more acquainted with the researcher and they were not waiting for their turn to talk, partially or completely disrespecting the class's rules. But that was mostly due to their enthusiasm to play and

support the idea of the daily activity they had in mind. Seeing all of them agreeing that this one was the one they wanted for today, the researcher supported their idea. The result was that all of the children participated and acted on stage, at least once – apart from young Ioli and the shy boy from the previous meeting, who came by with a very stressed look on their face and the researcher told them to sit quietly aside and watch if they did not feel like participating that day.

After their turn many children, especially the boys of the class, were wandering around the room, poking and running after each other. They were reluctant to stand in one place quietly and they were putting themselves into danger by trying to climb or hiding under a pile of plastic chairs on the side of the room. Thus, the researcher sent them back to the class, to sit with their main teacher and do some homework – both for their safety, since they were not willing to play with the team but on the chairs, and to diminish the noise and fuss they made.

Alexandra – Mr. Miltos, I want to play now...

In the meantime, Alexandra was running alongside the researcher constantly asking him to let her be the next to play, pulling his hand to get his attention. She was pressing strongly for it for at least ten minutes but it was only after he sent the noise-makers back in the classroom that he actually had the time and mind to pay the proper attention to her and not to the children being in danger of falling off the chairs. When she got up with her pair, this time found quite faster and easier by approaching and talking to the other girls with more ease, everyone laughed with her performance and she became extremely happy and excited. It seemed that with each passing meeting, she was feeling more confident with herself and the rest of the children with her, although they were still avoiding her in general, but not as much and in the way they did in the past.

The girls were closing the circle around the two ever-changing “contestants” on stage, increasingly carried away by the activity. Even Staurianna who did not really participate during the earlier meetings, decided to join the rest and be subject to their close observation. She did not try to make the other person laugh though, rather decided to sit on the passive defense, trying not to laugh at the other girl’s jokes and expressions. No

matter the rest of her peer's pressure urging her to try and act like a clown to make her partner laugh in turn, she was not willing to do so. She turned to the researcher bewildered, with a look on her face expressing deep perplexity in an inner battle of decision-making, willing for a solution, while the rest of the girls were bombarding her with requests to sit up and try to make the other girl laugh in her turn. Apart from the researcher though, two other girls went to her side to defend their friend, seeing that she was reluctant to act as requested and confused.

Researcher – *You don't have to do that, you don't need to.*

Girl – *Do a silly face.*

Researcher – *Don't make her do something she doesn't want to.*

Athena – *That's why I told her that she can just look, not do.*

Researcher – *If you don't want to do something, nobody is forcing you. You don't have to act if you don't feel like it.*

Athena – *You are not forced to make the other person laugh.*

Girl – *Maria didn't do it either.*

(Staurianna stands up and sits with the rest of the girls, with a slim self-satisfied smirk on her face. The two other girls that supported her, sit by her side. The game continues.)

Overall, the researcher observed that most of the children were interested in being “the clown”, the one that receives all the attention and tries to make his/her partner and the rest of the children laugh. Apart of the few exceptions already mentioned above, all of them wanted to be the center of attention, having an impressively excessive amount of positive energy to transmit towards the others. Even the ones that were a bit shy automatically renewed and doubled their efforts and level of commitment after the first laughs were heard from their peers, alongside the first positive comments from the researcher.

On the downside, another aspect of this meeting was the indifference towards the rules, as already mentioned above, especially during the first half of the hour. At least seven children eventually volunteered to put them back in order but quickly gave up and focused on what was happening on stage. After the first warnings, a lot of them complied and turned their interest towards what their peers were doing, but the majority continued to ignore the researcher's follow-up warning until the moment they were sent back into their classroom to sit with their main teacher and explain to her themselves the reason they were sent back.

This meeting continued to support the study's hypothesis that through Play and Performing the children find it easier to open themselves up and engage in social interaction with more ease.

3.4.6 The 6TH Meeting

Box 6: Activities during the 6th Meeting

Activity: "Pick a Topic"

"After splitting the class in two teams, boys and girls, we pick two subjects and work on them for the rest of the time freely, without any interference from the researcher's part apart from observing and asking questions if he had any."

With this activity the researcher aimed to observe the behaviour of the children in large groups, in a free-for-all environment. So far, according to the programme, there were mostly pairs or small team compilations, acting under the watchful eyes of the researcher and their peers. During this meeting, the goal was to observe them while no one else had his or her eyes directly focused on them, while giving the impression of a more "freestyle" activity session, in order to ease the children's defenses against any possible fear over criticism, peer observation and judgments.

Changes in activities: None

Reasons for change: None

Codes encountered during this meeting:

- Ease in Communication.
- Teaming up.
- Compliance with the class rules.
- Indifference to the class rules.
- Participation.

The big surprise of the day was Ioli with her “gang” of maids, dogs, cats and princesses. Ioli was a very distant and self-isolated girl during the majority of the meetings up to that point. She was mostly sitting alone in a corner, keeping a watchful eye on the rest of the children while they were performing, without averting her eyes when she was making eye contact with the researcher, as many other children did from time to time. What became apparent was that she was more than interested in the activities in the past, but also more than unable to allow herself to participate in a stress-free way.

Researcher – *Did you create this part by yourself or did the other girls give it to you?*

Ioli – *Umm, I remembered all the things we did the other time and... (it gets too noisy and it is impossible to hear the rest of her explanation).*

Researcher – *So, you like the theater-play that we are doing here...*

Ioli – *Yes! (chuckles)*

Researcher – *I noticed that you were a bit detached most of the previous times and I didn't know whether or not you liked what we are doing here. I am glad that you do!*

She was very emotional during the start of our meetings, when she was approaching the researcher to ask him if she could be excused and not participate for that time, during most cases speechless, just by using her eyes. Every time, seeing how emotional she was, the researcher gave her the freedom to choose to participate or not, stay near the window and look outside, talk with a friend and so forth. During this meeting though, Ioli was the core of every activity the Girl's team acted on, giving orders, talking about her own and her teammate's ideas, trying to constantly improve the performance.

Girl – She is the queen (Ioli) and she is her daughter, I am the maid and Alexandra is the other maid. The first maid trips and the lettuce flies off the plate, landing on the feet of the queen and the queen is asleep from the air that this maid was blowing to her. The royal turtle that is asleep, smells the lettuce and wakes up and approaches the queen's shoes...

(Ioli and the other girl explain at the same time, both extremely excited with their game, while the rest of the girls smile and laugh, making faces and poses when their role is referred to the researcher and he turns to look at them.)

Ioli – I am asleep and the lettuce has fallen on my feet and the royal turtle eats it and my shoes and she tickled me!

Girl – And I am the sea-turtle now that can fly on the air and I go for a swim!

Researcher – Who had the idea for the sea-turtle? (to Alexandra) Are you the 3rd daughter of the queen now? (She was trying to sit on one of the "thrones" that the girls had set-up)

Alexandra – I am the maid!

Every single time the researcher approached their side of the room, the girls had created a new role for one of them to take on and play out or they had evolved their story to another level. Their teamwork and use of imagination on this free-topic day was remarkable. There were no fights between them, only Alexandra once or twice did not want to comply fully and approached the researcher to complain. But after giving her some ideas of what else she could do and say to the girls if she did not enjoy her new role as much as the one before, she was literally running back to her team, rushing to

join them without losing any time with a big smile on her face, expressing her new ideas or agreement over the role they had for her. If it was not for the noise and fuss coming on the Boy's "Sports Side" of the room, it would be easy to hear what these small girls were constantly talking about right after finishing their current sketches, trying to evolve to a next level, with a happy and content smile on their face, constantly keeping each other in line with the rules of the class and their team.

Researcher – *What are you now?*

Ioli – *A dog!*

Researcher – *(To Alexandra on his side) Don't you want to do more? They have changed roles.*

Alexandra – *What should I do?*

Researcher – *Pick something yourself. You should do the royal cat. They have already a doggy.*

Alexandra – *Are they doing animals now?*

Researcher – *No, they still do the Queen one with the turtle but they decided to have a small dog too. Ioli wanted to act like a dog and so she does. Why don't you do the same?*

Alexandra had become more social, open-hearted and communicative towards her peers during these meetings and the rest of the children seemed to be a bit more eager to play with her after seeing the passion she had for playing. Although she was not immediately given a role, one of the girls had the idea to reshape their sketch to fit her in. As soon as that happened, the rest of the team nodded positively and made a circle around her smiling and expressing ideas for her role – in the past they would have probably ignored her and she would be annoyed and stick to the researcher's side for some time. At the very least, the girls had become more patient towards her realizing her potential and accepting her as an equal team member and a play-partner.

loli on the other hand, was a true surprise. Being petite and dainty, with big expressive eyes she always gave the impression of being the little girl that usually follows another, stronger in personality character. In the current meeting though, she ended up being the leader of her group, strong and independent, ready to play and have fun, while making decisions for her team and knowing when to hold back and let them decide for her in exchange. It is difficult to say whether or not that was a result of the activities so far, but it is a certainty that they played a big part in her decision-making during this meeting, as we saw her mentioning earlier.

The boys' team followed the pattern that most teams had over the past few meetings: sports as a theme of choice and a lot of noise and fuss, openly ignoring the rules, and also ignoring the researcher who was trying to regain some order. Apart from that though, their pattern of work was very similar to the Girl's team: they were talking (and yelling) about what should be done as a team and they were all playing together to achieve their goals. The positive element in their behaviour though, was that they embraced even the boys that were a bit more reluctant to participate, showing them that they can feel safe inside a team. They seemed to try to "protect" them from the researcher's eyes and approach for possible conversation, as he was doing with the girls, by leading them towards the opposite end of the room, taking peeks on whether or not he was looking towards them or approaching them. It was quite pleasing to see that they were protecting their friends and cared about their peers, lowering their stress level and the bar of what needed to be done by their side for all of them to have fun while complying with what the adult in the room asked them to do.

Overall, it can be safely stated that all the behaviours that were expected and wanted to be observed during all the meetings were achieved and were present during this meeting. Through the dramatic game activities the children surpassed their limitations and opened themselves to discussion and criticism from and towards their peers. Ease of communication between them was observed, as well as difficulty and unwillingness towards communication with the researcher. They teamed up and participated on every possible aspect of the game they created, while disrespecting some rules in the

process, but that was something to be expected in a freelance environment of play and action.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to present the Data collected through the Codes of Analysis that were developed for its categorization. Regarding the presentation of the analysis in this Chapter, it can be supported that the raw data material, both vocal and descriptive, gives clear indications of what the common core subjects behind the participants' actions, reactions and way of thinking and feelings were. Their social skills level, always intertwined with their self-esteem level, had a huge impact on their behaviour and all of them showed a movement towards a more positive side through the activities held, over the period of the eight weeks that the researcher visited their school.

It was positively observed that specific children seemed to show improvement during the flow of each consecutive meeting (i.e Ioli during all the meetings was silent and distant but eventually by the 6th meeting there was a plainly observable positive change in her behaviour, while also Alexandra and Nikolas had similar behavioural pattern improvements).

In the following chapter, the researcher will demonstrate and explain the process and main theory he mapped and mentally followed through all the above meetings, trying to give all the children a way to transfer from any negative state of mind or feeling they might have to a more positive one. The main goal of investigating whether through sociodramatic play activities, pupils with and without LD develop their self-esteem and gain better social competence skills, is best met through the following chapter where this data is discussed and interpreted drawing again on the current literature in the fields of study.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter of the study aims to critically discuss the findings presented in Chapter 3 of this Thesis. A review of the codes formulated to assist the data analysis will be conducted in relation to the literature reviewed and the aim of the study. Through this process, an interpretation of the findings of the study will be attempted and ultimately whether the aim of the study was met and the initial research questions answered.

4.1 A brief review of the aims and research questions in relation to the data

The aim of this study was to investigate whether through the means of socio-dramatic play activities inspired by Drama in Education, pupils with Learning Difficulties more effectively develop their Self-Esteem and their Social Skills. Through a systematic review of the research literature in the fields of Drama in Education, Self-Esteem and Social Skills and LD, two research questions were formulated upon which the methodology of the study was based:

1. In what ways might pupils' participation in drama activities increase their self-esteem?
2. Are social skills acquired and/or further developed when participating in drama activities and how is this evidenced?

Both research aim and questions set by the researcher were addressed through the collected data as the Chapter of the Data Analysis revealed. The first research question was mainly addressed through data collected over the duration of the 4th, 5th and 6th meeting, mainly through the specific data that was provided by the participants named

“Shy Boy”, “Ioli”, “Nikolas” and “Alexandra”. The activities “Shopkeepers”, “Clown Contest” and “Pick a topic”, used during the pre-mentioned meetings respectively, seemed to have the most interesting effect of keeping the children’s attention on the stage, at least for the majority of them, while also unifying them through the means of team-spirit. The effectiveness of these activities, always referring to the first research question, lies on the fact that gradually the children mentioned above decided to leave their self-created isolation sphere, having the thought that they can be part of the team – either by themselves or whispered to them by their friends or inspired openly by the researcher. All of them showed that they still had some insecurity while acting on stage, but kept on trying to achieve what they had decided to present to the class. When their results were met with positive comments both from the researcher and their peers, their attitude was instantly shifted towards the positive. The comments affected their feeling of self-worth and their self-esteem, and drove them to repeatedly ask to get on stage, or at least sit down with a huge smile on their face. The very least that this string of activities offered them, was the belief that they can get on stage, in front of their peers, alongside the belief that they can achieve a personal goal if they persist.

The response to the second research question is evidenced in data that reveals the ways in which pupils’ social skills surface when engaging with particular types of activities. The relevant data arose mainly from the same children mentioned earlier and arising from the same meetings. As presented in Chapter 3, Ioli was quite shy at the beginning and the middle of the programme but she gained in confidence nearer the end: she became part of a team and showed her friends what she had acquired through observing the meetings during which she was standing by the window looking at the class. She became the Leader and then the Clown, she was kind and open to talking and to accepting suggestions from her teammates. Above all, she was having fun. In addition, Nikolas and Alexandra managed from outcasts of the group, with an extremely short number of close friends, to become full participants in the activities: they were talking with a broader number of children, declaring openly their agreement or disagreement while also being more tolerant on what they could/wanted to do or not. The Shy Boy decided that he would at least comment on the majority of the sketches instead of sitting aside alone, not even paying attention to what his peers were

presenting on stage. These shifts in behaviour were mostly evidenced towards the end of the period of data collection, yet they did signify a positive development in these participating children's self-esteem and social skills.

4.2 Reviewing the Coding System in light of the Analysis

Throughout the previous chapter, the coding system was enabled by the data categorization and led to the subsequent qualitative analysis of the study's findings. The table below is a visual presentation of both the core positive/negative behaviours that were observed and developed during the analysis into codes, alongside their synergy, change and unifying outcome under the influence of positive aspects of self-esteem and use (or absence of) of social skills. This visualization of the key interactions of the current study is essentially the development of the coding system into a theoretical model, in the light of the data analysis.

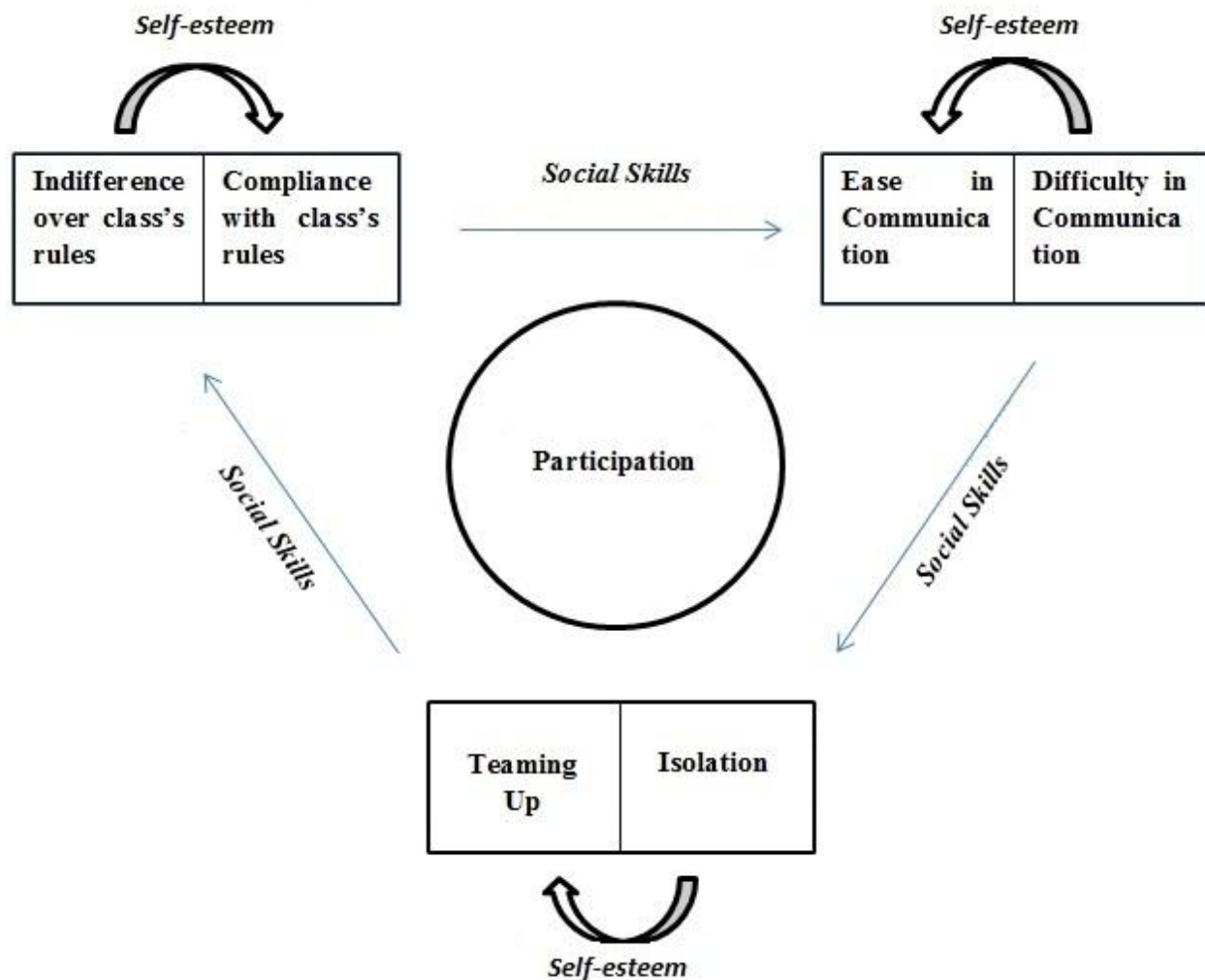


Figure 1: Codes-Outcomes

The three boxes consist of the positive and negative side of the participants' core behaviours of *What* was happening in the classroom. The semi-circular one way arrows **over** individual boxes interpret the influence of a positive self-esteem attitude within each individual context of behaviour. The one way arrows **between** the boxes reveal the circle of action-reaction that the children were following while passing through each of the three behavioural stages, through the use or absence of use of their social skills. In short, the arrows constitute the idea of *How* action/behaviour evolved during each individual meeting.

Finally, the circle in the middle of the table constitutes the universal-unifying category which seems to be comprised of all the individual categories around it. Pupils' participation in the programme was the ultimate goal of the researcher and at the same time an observational/analysis code. Reaching that goal means that the pupils would have overcome their fear of exposing themselves to the critique of their peers, while at the same time feeling they belong within their peer group of classmates.

This study highlighted the finding that pupils seemed to follow a particular path of actions and reactions that were greatly affected by - and at the same time - affected their self-esteem alongside their social skills. A further presentation of the behavioural categorizations visualized in the above Figure, based on prior literature is now attempted.

Beginning with one of the negatively-oriented codes *Difficulty in Communication*, the concept behind this code, in terms of the literature, came directly from the fact that LD have as one of seven common possible outcomes Speech Impairment, both on receptive (listening) and expressive language (speaking) (Vaughn & Hogan 1994, in Nowicki 2003; Lyon 1996). In terms of the raw data collected, the creation of that particular code originated from the fact that the majority of the children with LD avoided talking with the researcher or their peers, mainly during the first couple of meetings; when they had no other choice but to respond to a question, they uttered just the exact amount of words that were needed for them to get done with what was asked of them.

For example, during the first meeting it was mentioned that some of the children were distant, giving shorter answers in length, avoiding making interpersonal Communication openings (p. 80). A more vivid example was “Ioli” who would request to be excused from the activities with only a couple words (2nd meeting, p.89). This continued up until the very last meeting where her behaviour shifted towards a very positive outcome, as is extensively presented below, on the positive behaviour-code section. Another example was the “Shy Boy” for whom it took 4 consecutive meetings and some kind words from both his close friend and the researcher to finally talk and participate in the activities (4th meeting, p. 100-101). Fortunately, as it will be shown by this code’s counterpart discussed below, that kind of behaviour was existent only during the first (maximum) three meetings, for the majority of the children.

The second negative code-behaviour is the one of *Isolation*, which is discussed under the umbrella/theories of Social Skills as evidenced in Figure 1. According to the literature presented in Chapter 1, it was shown that social skills are necessary for a person to complete a task within the social norm (Cavell, 1990; Gambrill & Ritchey, 1986; Gresham 1983 in Gresham & MacMillan 1997; McFall, 1982). It was also stated that skills are composed by categories such as: cooperation, self-control, empathy, ability to initiate and sustain social interaction (Elliot & McKinnie, 1994 in Nowicki 2003). Thus, any deficit on these skills might lead to problematic social behaviour (Gresham, 1981; Gresham & Elliot, 1989), such as self-isolation. That was exactly the kind of behaviour that the researcher observed for the majority of the children who were either annoyed by their peers’ behaviour or unwilling/afraid to participate in the activities, wandering around the room or sitting by the window alone.

Three children that quite clearly exhibited such behaviours were Alexandra and her brother Nikolas as well as Ioli. Beginning on the 2nd meeting, the first two both retracted themselves away from the rest of the group right after they briefly performed on stage (p. 86 and 87 respectively) and Ioli joined them a bit later with her friend (p. 89). On the 3rd meeting, Alexandra was isolated from the formed teams, until the researcher asked some of the girls if they wanted to team up with her (p. 92), while one of the other non-LD girls in the class decided to isolate herself from the whole class, sitting on the side of

the window alone, after falling out with both her team and her new one (p. 93). Similarly with the first code –Difficulty in Communication- the behaviour that related to the code Isolation was not evidently encountered after the 3rd meeting for the majority of the children, both LD and non-LD. Especially for Alexandra and Nikolas, although both self-isolated and peer-isolated, a change was observed during the second half of the data collection period/meetings.

The final code from the negative side of the list is *Indifference towards the class's & game time rules*. Through the teacher interview a particular picture of several pupils was validated (particularly Nikos and Dimitris p. 93, but also David); these pupils faced problems at home, a fact that caused much attention-seeking during class. Low self-esteem (thus the need to amplify it by gathering the attention) can be the byproduct of the previously mentioned deficiencies and problematic social behaviour - alongside anxiety, depression and other effects (Bruck 1986; Bryan T 1991; Johnson & Blalock 1987 in Lyon 1996; Matson, 2009). That *indifference* was a big part of most of the meetings close to the end of the programme for those particular pupils especially, but also in general too at the level of the whole class, since the end of the academic year was looming up with each passing week and the children were getting restless. That fact, could have played a role affecting the pupils's behaviour towards the rules, but it is unclear whether or not it actually happened and in what extent it could have actually affect them individually. Thus, this researcher takes it as a variable to be included and concerned about, on a minimum level at least.

This third negative code, particularly during the 2nd meeting, was clearly outlined in the data collected from Alexandra, Nikolas and David all of whom ignored the rest of the children who waiting for the researcher's permission to stand and perform (p. 86-88) and on the 3rd meeting it was strongly manifested through Nikos and Dimitris running around, challenging their peers into running after them (p. 93). On the 5th meeting the majority of the boys were sent back into their original classroom, because they were ignoring the activity's procedure and they were playing on a pile of plastic chairs, endangering their physical well-being in the process (p. 104). Finally, on the 6th meeting the same team of boys was making an excessive amount of noise despite the fact that

they were asked many times to perform and play respecting the fact that they would not be alone in the room (p. 110). It can be plainly seen that the problem of indifference towards the class's rules over proper behaviour was progressively getting worse and worse, at least at the part of the boys participants of the research that, compared to the girls, did not show the same amount of interest from the very start. Another factor for that behaviour has to be considered though: with each weekly meeting passing by, the children were getting closer to the summer-time vacations, a fact that was supported also by their teacher as a solid reason behind this behaviour.

Before delving into the positive side of the codes-behaviours it has to be stated that in addition to the prior principle of the coding's presentation by reviewing the Literature on the subject, followed up by the on-the-field experiences, they will also be presented in direct contrast to their negative counterparts.

The code, *Ease in Communication* was considered as a major component of the analysis since (1) it enhances bonds with parents, teachers and other persons of importance to a child, (2) it nurtures the intelligence of the individual through exchange of opinions and ideas and (3) it provides an active involvement in everyday life, instead of a passive-observant one (Hughes & Wilson, 2004). As was discussed in Chapter 1, overall, an improvement in the communication skills of the individual can derive through his/her involvement with DiE (Andersen, 2004; Emunah, 1994; Fleming, Merrell, & Tymms, 2004; Landy, 1991).

The majority of the non-LD children were outgoing and eager to talk with the researcher both in the classroom and beyond (2nd meeting, p. 85). During the 1st meeting for both of the activities most of them were giving long, detailed responses to the researcher (p. 80-81) while making a direct request to their peers to pass them the ball or selecting a particular peer to talk next (p. 80). On the 2nd meeting, their reactions remained at the same level, giving details of what their pantomime was about (i.e Athena, p. 88) while on the 3rd, that flow of information and dialog started being transferred towards their peers, with the introduction of the team activities, trying to make the perfect choices for everyone to enjoy the game (see p. 91-92).

The 4th meeting was when the researcher observed the first positive behavioural change from one of the children that belonged in the target group of the study in general and that the teachers had pinpointed as being an interesting case to focus upon. The “Shy Boy” took a first step towards a more open and expressive kind of behaviour: with the help of the researcher, one of his friends managed to produce a verbal reaction from the “Shy Boy” and secure his participation in the activity (p. 100-101). After that incident, the boy was more eager to talk to the researcher during the following meetings, mostly to express his will to not participate but just observe the rest of its peers playing. It was an improvement though, because up until that moment his stress and introversion were particularly evident.

Continuing to focus on positive change with regards communication skills an improvement from both Ioli and Alexandra was evidenced during the 6th meeting. Ioli shifted in a single meeting from being introvert and distant to being the center of attention and the leader of her team, not afraid to talk with the researcher extensively to inform him about their play (p. 107-108). Alexandra had become more expressive and eager to talk in the last few meetings, especially after the researcher helped her get into the girls’ team who gladly accepted her (p. 109). As is visible in the data, *Ease in Communication* was a behaviour that was present from day one for most of the children, and something to be achieved and conquered by others, but in the end it was manifested the very same way, no matter how it was achieved.

Continuing with the positive codes, *Teaming up*, as a concept is tightly tied with the previous code. In Andersen (2010) it is stated that DiE involves whole-class activities (in improvised roles within imaginary situations) with the learner being both a participant and an observer, interacting and staying idle to observe the results of these actions (Andersen, 2004; Emunah, 1994; Landy, 1991). Without Communication this interaction would be unapproachable as a goal; but from the moment it is achieved, Action is brought to life requiring and expanding interpersonal social skills, leading to Teamwork (Henry, 2000 and Basourakos, 1998 in Belliveau, 2007).

The children's preference to perform in teams instead of individually in front of their peers became obvious during the 2nd meeting (p. 89). It was on the 3rd meeting though that this behaviour seemed most obvious, through the extensive discussions the children had over what they wanted to present as a solid group, solving their differences first (p. 91-92) and by finding common ground for everyone to express himself/herself (p. 93). The 4th meeting was mostly based on the children working together as pairs, so the teamwork was between just two participants, but as mentioned earlier that meeting was the one that the "Shy Boy" started being more social and made its first appearance on stage accompanying his friend. His reaction after completing their sketch revealed much pride for their success (p. 101). On the 5th meeting, Alexandra displayed fewer problems than previous times on pairing up with a peer in order to perform on stage. After asking for the researcher's permission to be the next one to play, she immediately headed towards one of the girls and asked her to be her partner for the clown sketch. The girl accepted and the results were pleasing for both themselves and the class (p. 104). Alexandra, alongside Ioli, were the protagonists of the teaming up part of the 6th meeting. After a slight suggestion from the researcher's side on how the girls could play with Alexandra, they gladly accepted her in their team and they immediately created a role for her (p. 108109). Ioli proved to be the leader behind every decision the team was making that day and the center of attention.

The final of the positive behaviour codes is the *Compliance with the class's and game's rules*. As it was stated in the Literature Review Chapter of the study, according to Gresham (1983) the positive outcomes of an early intervention towards enhancing the SE and the Social Skills of an individual can have as a direct result: "...peer acceptance, significant others' positive judgments of social competence, academic achievement, adequate self-concept, positive attitudes towards school and freedom from loneliness" (Gresham, 1983, in Gresham and MacMillan 1997, p. 381). Both in theory and in practice, all the above categories of possible results are considered to be the "norm": the collection of all the aims and goals that consists the behaviours and attitudes expected from the children individuals towards their environment. This researcher stepped on the fifth expected result, the "*positive attitudes towards school*" for the creation of the final code under presentation.

There were very few exceptions to that behaviour, mainly the ones mentioned earlier under the code *Indifference towards the class's & game time's rules*. The only noteworthy, specific example of prominent pupil behaviour was during the 5th meeting. During that meeting, after the boys were confronted by the researcher for playing on the plastic chairs, away from the rest of the class, making noise and disturbing the flow of the activities, some of them returned to the circle in the center but for a very brief duration of time. After a couple of minutes they were gone, back with their friends over and under the plastic pile. But they immediately complied with the researcher's request to get back to class, even though a few tried to persuade him not to send them back, and showed a great deal of sadness for having to leave.

The final code, is the unifying code-behaviour of *Participation*. The researcher addresses this particular code as the inward oriented decision and personal trial to move from the negative types of behaviours-codes stated above to the positive side **and** their permanent acquisition as an outcome of the whole procedure. This thought is based on the fact that *Participation* is both the aim and the outcome of Inclusive Education as presented in Chapter 2. It was stated there that the *participation* of LD pupils in a mixed ability group has the positive outcomes (Allport, 1954; Maras & Brown, 2000) of: "...increasing access (or presence) of all students (not only marginalized or vulnerable groups), enhancing the school personnel's and student's acceptance of all students, maximizing student participation in various domains of activity, and increasing the achievement of all students" (Booth et al., 2000; Kalambouka et al., 2005 in Artiles et al. 2006, p. 69).

In terms of the current study, the researcher tried to enhance the children's self-esteem through the use of positive language and encouraging attitude, showing excitement and interest in their work (i.e. 4th Meeting, p. 98-99) so they would be willing to also advance with the evolution of their social skills (and the other way around too, since it was shown that self-esteem and social skills are strongly interlocked). By feeling comfortable with their own-self, feeling safe about their ideas, skills and emotions the children opened themselves to new trials and experiences to gain more through playing, talking and laughing with the groups of their friends and peers – an important step and procedure

that was mentioned on Emunah's (1994) five stages of drama therapy model in Chapter 1. The created teams with aims like impressing the researcher with their results (i.e. 1st Meeting, p. 83: the girls doing the acrobatic-balancing trick), make something different than the rest of the teams in the room (i.e. 3rd Meeting, p. 94-95: Nikolas' team with the dinosaurs' extinction sketch), or offer the opportunity to the rest of the class to laugh and have a good time (i.e. 5th Meeting, p. 104: Alexandra doing funny shenanigans to make everyone laugh).

Based on all the descriptions above, it is demonstrated and supported that this study's aim seems to have been achieved. The majority of the negative behaviours that were observed on the very first meetings slowly degenerated and the children seemed to bond with their peers and the researcher, forming stronger social connections, while they at the same time enhancing their self-esteem. Gradually, the positive behaviours became dominant, reaching the end-goal of all children *participating* naturally in the activities, without hesitation or second thoughts, without the persisting and gentle urges from either the researcher or their peers and friends.

Summary

In sum, the outcome of this study, as supported through detailed, observational and ethnographic-oriented data, is the idea that through the use of Drama in Education, pupils with Learning Difficulties and Social Skill deficiencies are provided with an alternative, more flexible and personalized way to:

1. Feel confident and believe in themselves (Self-Esteem aim of the study),
2. Increase their level of socialization and level of social skills (Social Skill aim of the study), and
3. Take a deep and detailed look in all the procedures this researcher utilized and that the children underwent to evolve their abilities and strengthen their image of Self.

These findings were discussed in accordance with and in support of the key literature in the field. It was previously presented through these studies that the use of DiE inside schools and classrooms can be beneficial for children of the early stages of primary school, especially if they are under the umbrella of LD. Through the socio-dramatic activities, the teacher is able to manage the class in a holistic way while at the same time keeping his/her attention on these children, without targeting them, on accordance of their difficult behaviour.

This researcher, takes as an example to support his above claim of the value of the activities an off the record discussion that he had with one of the substitute teachers who joined one of the first meetings with the pupils. During the meeting the substitute teacher's job was to help the researcher keep the children in order, something that was not that hard to achieve just by her presence, thus allowing her to mostly observe the whole procedure. One of her comments afterwards was that she felt that she could potentially use similar activities in the classroom with a relative ease, even though she admitted that she lacked special training and knowledge on the field of LDs and Drama techniques; that was the case for her because: "although there is theory and science behind these, something that is useful to know, if you observe it closely, it's practically playing, learning and having fun on a level that children love and understand", as she put it. Her words were the base of the claim that these activities are valuable, even to a teacher completely ignorant to the subjects under discussion in this study, especially if the teacher is actually interested to apply a similar technique and understand at least its core elements of "learning" through "having fun".

It was also shown through the raw data presented that the behavioural patterns connected with negative behaviours such as isolation and lack of communicative skills gradually disappeared. In their place new seeds of positive-oriented behaviours were sown, such as teaming up with others, talking openly about what each person's preferences are and how possible differences can be breached, under the ideals of *teamwork* and *team-spirit*.

The procedures and models of Andersen, Emunah and Landy on the therapeutic use and application of Drama and its techniques, as presented in Chapter 1, met a promising and fertile ground to sprout and help the participants evolve their self-esteem and social skills. Through these and his own experiences, this researcher concluded to results similar to these of earlier studies on the field of therapeutic intervention through drama, like Jindal-Snape's and Vettraino's, Peter's, Slade's, Couroucli-Robertson's and the rest mentioned in Chapter 1. All of them were a very strong tool and guide during the conduction of this research programme, sharing the common outcome of enabling participants to gain self-confidence and/or new social skills in their own personalized way.

Studies based on and supporting the participants to engage in the process of drama activities involving physical, auditory and verbal elements like Caplan's (2006), Corbett et al (2011), Kempe and Tissot (2012), O' Leary (2013), Portman-Minne and Semrud-Clikeman (2011), and Rhoades (2012) were also extremely helpful; they provided a proven positive result on drama oriented interventions with target groups of participants under one of the most serious forms of learning difficulty impairments, Autism. Since these studies succeeded on their goal, this researcher believed that a group of pupils under a lighter form of LD could benefit equally to what Drama as a tool of Special Need education could offer, a fact that it is supported by the findings of the study in the previous two Chapters.

As for the enhancement of SE and advancement of Social Skills of the participants, in Chapter 1 there were presented Burke and Stet's (1999) and Cast and Brook's (2002) theories on SE and Gresham and MacMillan's (1997) on Social Skills; the results that this study presented co-ally with these theories, agreeing that the pupils verified themselves when personal characteristics matched the social situation's requested characteristics, achieving recognition for their efforts and thus increasing their SE.

Conclusion

Summary of the Study

As initially presented in the beginning Chapter of this Thesis, there is scarce literature linking the terms of Drama in Education, Self-Esteem and Social Skills, especially in populations of children with Learning Difficulties. While each individual theme – or even pairings between these themes – has been the focus of much research investigation, a common ground where all of them stand on and are used to make an intervention is not encountered often enough.

By making use of the data collection tools that an Ethnographic Case Study has to offer (i.e. participant observation in particular and interviews), this researcher managed to acquire a deeper, detailed view of the participants' behavioural and emotional patterns as they engaged in drama activities over a period of time. With the support of qualitative data analysis, interpretations of the data were developed that attempted to explain and present the meanings behind their behaviours and feelings, with the ultimate goal to enhance the effectiveness of the scheduled intervention with drama-based activities, always adjusting to the individual and the situation if necessary. In many ways, therefore, data analysis and interpretation were developed in parallel although in the writing up of this Thesis they are presented in succession for the ease of the reader.

The methodology and means that were used to code-categorize the data were also presented, alongside an extensive description of their analysis, for each meeting respectively. Through these codes, the researcher made an attempt to connect his study with the rest of the Literature by making connections with previous studies in the field that either openly supported a finding of the study, or guided his own way of thinking and theory-crafting towards that direction.

In short, the current study provided evidence that socio-dramatic play and drama activities in general do indeed help pupils develop their self-esteem and social

competence skills, especially in the case of children with some form of learning difficulty.

Through the rich descriptions that the ethnographic case study allowed to emerge, it was revealed that by the end of the fieldwork period, a number of pupils experienced a transition from the negative behaviours characterizing self-esteem and social skills to a more positive outcome. The Shy Boy was the most subtle example, having witnessed the extent and ways his social skills can evolve to his own benefit within the classroom, but without making any steps towards that direction further than that stage of understanding. Staurianna is placed in the same category, shyly taking some steps into the spotlight, enjoying her time with her friends but quickly deciding that she preferred to stay aside and mostly watch for the time being; the will to participate was there to an extent, but it was limited to a brief amount of time on stage, compared to the time her close friends were spending there.

The best and brightest examples of the intervention's positive outcome were Alexandra, Nikolas and Ioli. The first two, the siblings, were isolated from their peers due to their challenging behaviour at the beginning of the study. Eventually, after being successful in their roles within the various teams they were placed by the researcher, their popularity increased. Nikolas was approached more often by the rest of the boys to be part of their team and Alexandra also achieved some accolades within a team she was approached to play with. Finally, Ioli constituted the most unexpected behavioural shift in this study. By the end of fieldwork, she had emerged as the dominant figure inside a team composed by half the children of the class.

Overall, this study was fruitful in supporting and, to an extent, developing what other studies in the fields of Self-Esteem, Social Skills and Learning Difficulties have investigated over the previous years, yet with a more specialized and narrow target: the benefits of Drama in Education in the context of Inclusive Education.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that every step achieved towards the conclusion of the thesis (scheduling, intervention, data extraction, data interpretation) was always previously examined through the spectrum of morality towards the participants of the

research and through this researcher's own principles. Drama in Education is based on mutual relationships of trust and support and it is on those principles that this study was designed and conducted.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations that impacted the development and conduct of study. Initially, during the conduct of the study, a shorter amount of time than originally requested by the school was allowed. Eventually, this did not affect in a negative way the research and its outcomes; on the contrary, since the number of meetings was slightly decreased the researcher had to rigidly revise his activity schedule and keep only those that seemed, through trial and error, to be the most effective in encouraging children's participation. The activities that were removed from the intervention were those that would have been used to create a variation to maintain children's interest and engagement levels; on hindsight, this proved to be trivial since the children did not lose interest easily and even when this happened, a slight shift of the activities brought them back quite rapidly.

The reduction of timeframe seemed to impact more on another aspect of the research; that of data collection through teachers' interviews. The study had initially aimed for two (2) interviews with the main teachers of the classes: one at the start of the meetings and one near the end. Through these, information would have been gathered about the children, especially those with LD, through the teachers' perspective, about their behaviour prior and after the intervention programme respectively. Instead, time was provided for only one interview with each of the teachers, since their time-table was over-booked, being the end of the academic year. Thus, it was decided to place this interview shortly after the middle of the data collection period, around the 5th meeting. While this did seem to create a void in the collected data, by that time the research seemed to have collected enough information to create individual pupil profiles, which were then used during this interview as a vantage point for the discussion with the teacher. In short, the study did not benefit from the two interviews in order to gain a

clear view of the before and after image and behaviour of the children; every attempt, however was made to collect data regarding the teachers' perspective on the pupils' profiles developed at that specific point in the study.

Perhaps another limitation of the current study was the fact that the researcher was both the activities' invigilator while at the same time collecting scientific data. Having to record and write down in-depth field-notes after each and every meeting proved to be challenging, lest something of importance was lost in the process. This was inevitable, however, due to the ethnographic nature of the research, and the role of the researcher as participant-observer during data collection. Every effort was made to document the meetings immediately after they were held, by taking notes and transcribing them onto Word documents clearly labeled. The audio-recordings of the meetings also assisted toward this aim, although not every single voice was audible; these did provide, however, a helpful reminder of what took place and assisted the researcher's memory.

Lastly, a final limitation could be considered the fact that the researcher was alone during the meetings with the children; being the only adult in the room, and one that was not the teacher or had a clear 'teacher-role' seemed to create for pupils the impression that they did not need to carefully consider their behaviour. While at the start of the research it was agreed that the researcher would be assisted by a teacher in practice this was not always possible, due to school meetings or scheduled school activities. This did create some unpleasant and noisy situations at times, with some pupils showing openly indifference towards the class's rules. The data collected from these meetings and pupils did, however, become a part of the study, and they served to reveal also some shifts in certain pupils' behaviour towards a more positive disposition during the final meetings.

Furthermore, the study may have benefitted from a different methodological design, in the form of a quasi-experiment that would include: (1) a group of children composed only of pupils with LD, (2) a group of children composed solely by pupils without LD and finally (3) a mixed group of pupils of both with and without a form of LD.

All the groups could undergo the same activities under the observant eye of both a participant observer, who would be taking part and conducting the activities as this researcher did during the current study, and another distant observer, who would be keeping notes about behaviours and actions while staying away from the center of the action, being more objective. It would be interesting to compare the results of all these different groups: what they had in common and what not, in which directions they advanced their self-esteem and social skills or not, in what magnitude ... In the case of an extended study in the form of a PhD, for example, data could be gathered from more than one school, aiming towards a greater generalization of the findings.

In the case, however, of a single researcher undertaking a single study, the current investigation was already quite ambitious both in its aims and the ways in which data was collected (in the form of participant-observation). The inclusion of the greatest number of meetings possible, the focus on depth, rather than breadth during data collection, as well as a constant reflective attitude during data collection and analysis served to counteract to an extent some of these limitations.

Personal Notes

On a personal level, the study benefitted both researcher and also the participating pupils. It was as though this study made a real difference in pupils' lives at least during that particular time of the meetings and perhaps beyond these, though no data was collected as to any subsequent impact. On a number of occasions, the researcher saw himself through these children and observed similar changes and shifts in their self-esteem and social skills as those he himself underwent during his university Drama Education.

Overall, I felt that this was an experience and chain of events and actions that were not only the result of a clearly defined and specifically designed educational research study; it was also a life-changing experience and an important lesson. I felt that I advanced and evolved as a person and character through introspection, gaining something

towards that direction every time I had to slip into the shoes of a child participant and try to feel and think like he or she would in any particular situation that was underway.

Topics for Future Research

On this wider basis for research, a more extensive study towards the goal of granting Drama in Education a permanent thesis inside the Greek educational curriculum in schools could be conducted. In the country that gave birth to Drama and Theatre, the absence of these aspects of knowledge from the curriculum is tremendously unjustified. A longitudinal research study in several schools could provide the necessary data for the educational and scientific community to step up and request certain changes towards the more stable inclusion of Drama in the curriculum.

Another interesting topic that could be investigated in the near future would first constitute of tracking the participants of the current research in 1-2 years. An interview with them on their personal view about the changes they have experienced in their self-esteem and the evolution of their social skills after the intervention programme could yield interesting data on how the current study might have influenced their lives. A step further could be to ask them whether or not they would be interested to reenact these activities, either adjusted to their current age and interests or, even more interesting as an idea, reenact them as researchers with a group of younger children, in accordance to what this researcher did with them, to experience the other side of the intervention, that of the researcher and instigator of action.

Putting aside these limitations, however, it could be stated that this study did manage to achieve to a good extent its initial aim, with at least a number of positive outcomes and results.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Teacher's Interview

1. When did you realize that the child had LD, **a)** what kind and **b)** what were the initial actions/steps that you took and **c)** what was the child's reaction before and after?
2. Would you characterize the child, at the present time, as an introvert/shy or extrovert/outgoing person? Would you characterize him/her as a strong person, using his/her own strength or as a person that requires the support of others? Is he/she an independent person or one that creates dependence relationships with others?
3. How the child reacts when it is surrounded by familiar faces and how with non-familiar, according to your knowledge? Does he/she goes after social accession and acceptance or is he/she indifferent?
4. Talk to me about things that the child likes and/or things he/she does not like (i.e. friends, teachers, classes). Does he/she like to spend time alone or with friends?
5. What is the child's school image: **a)** how does he/she behave in the classroom, outside during break, **b)** does he/she try to follow with the class's tempo and be punctual with his/her homework obligations, **c)** does he/she need motivation to do so or not, **d)** does he/she find it hard to keep up and if so how is it observable?
6. Would you say that the child is happy or sad at the present moment of its life? If the latter is true, do you believe that this situation could be improved and how?
7. Which personal approach seems to be the most beneficial for the child so far, if there has been any? Which one do you believe as the optimal one and the least suitable for that particular individual?

Appendix 2

Consent Form



ΛΕΟΝΤΕΙΟ ΛΥΚΕΙΟ ΠΑΤΗΣΙΩΝ
ΝΕΙΓΥ 17 - ΑΘΗΝΑ 111 43
ΤΗΛ.: 210.25.22.402 - FAX: 210.25.15.049
e. mail: l. leonin @ leonteios. gr
http : www.leonteios.gr

Αθήνα, 30-5-2015

Αγαπητοί γονείς,

Στο πλαίσιο της διαρκούς προσπάθειας του σχολείου μας να εκσυγχρονίζει τις μεθόδους διδασκαλίας του προς όφελος των μαθητών του, πρόκειται να διεξαχθεί έρευνα με στόχο να εξετάσει το ρόλο του Θεατρικού Παιχνιδιού στην απόκτηση επαρκών κοινωνικών δεξιοτήτων των παιδιών, καθώς και στην ανάπτυξη της αυτοεκτίμησής τους.

Η έρευνα αυτή θα πραγματοποιηθεί στο πλαίσιο των δραστηριοτήτων του Θεατρικού Παιχνιδιού υπό την επίβλεψη του δασκάλου τους κ. Λυσίμαχου Ζαρίφη και του ερευνητή κ. Μιλτιάδη Τουλάτου (University of Bolton Department of Social Science & Well Being). Επιδίωξή μας είναι τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας να συμβάλουν στην καλύτερη κατανόηση της σχέσης μεταξύ του θεάτρου και της ανάπτυξης της προσωπικότητας των μαθητών στο σχολικό περιβάλλον.

Τα δεδομένα της έρευνας είναι εμπιστευτικά και μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν μόνο από τον επιβλέποντα δάσκαλο και τον ερευνητή. Θα τηρηθεί απόλυτη ανωνυμία όσον αφορά τους συμμετέχοντες κατά την έκδοση των αποτελεσμάτων.

Επειδή μέρος της έρευνας χρειάζεται να ηχογραφηθεί, η έγκρισή σας είναι απαραίτητη.

Σας ευχαριστούμε εκ των προτέρων για την εμπιστοσύνη με την οποία περιβάλλετε το σχολείο μας.

Ο Διευθυντής του Δημοτικού
Ηλίας Γκαραβέλης



Το παρόν απόκομμα επιστρέφεται στη Γραμματεία του Δημοτικού μέχρι τις 8/5/2015

ΔΗΛΩΣΗ

Ο/Η, γονέας του/της
..... δηλώνω ότι επιτρέπω στο παιδί μου να λάβει μέρος στην
έρευνα για το Θεατρικό Παιχνίδι που θα πραγματοποιηθεί στον χώρο του σχολείου.

Αθήνα,

Ο γονέας

(Υπογραφή)

Consent Form (Translation)

Athens, 30-5-2015

Dear Parents,

In the field of our school's constant effort to improve its teaching techniques for the benefit of its pupils, a research will be conducted aiming to investigate the role of Drama Games in the procedure of acquisition of adequate social skills for the children, alongside the enhancement of their self-esteem.

That research will be conducted framed under the activities of the Drama Games class, under the supervision of the teacher Mr. Lisimahos Zarifis and the researcher Mr. Miltiadis Toulatos (University of Bolton Department of Social Science & Well Being). Our aim is that the results of the research will contribute to a better understanding over the connection between Theater and the development of the pupils' personality within the academic environment.

The data of the study is confidential and can only be used by the researcher and the supervising professor. There will be total anonymity concerning all the participants when the results will be published.

Part of the research procedure requires to be audio-recorded, so your consent is necessary.

Thank you in advance for the trust with which you surround our school.

The director of Primary School

Ilias Garavelis

(Cut and return to the secretariat up until 8/5/2015)

Statement

I.....parent ofdeclare
that I allow my child to participate in the study for the Drama Games that will be
conducted within the school's premises.

Athens,.....

The parent

(Signature)

Appendix 3

Extracts from transcribed field notes from meeting no. 4

Extract 1: Audio recording during the meeting

Athena – *Can we play (on stage) again?*

Researcher – *If you want and if you find a subject different from what the rest of your peers have. Yes, (to the whole class) if you can try different subjects to play on, not bookstores or restaurants from every team. (Back to the two girls) First, let's let the rest that haven't played their sketch for us pay, and then you can go up again. (To the whole class) Don't talk with each other loud! Look at the teams, please.*

(The Loud Boy and the Curly Haired Blonde Boy go on stage.)

Researcher – *What did you play for us?*

Loud Boy – *He was a customer that comes to pay with money butr the cashier doesn't want (to take) them and at the end...*

Curly Haired Blonde Boy – *...the customer leaves yelling!*

Researcher – *Nice one, I liked it! It was a bit different from the previous ones!*

(David and Blonde boy with glasses)

Researcher – *What did you do?*

Blonde boy with glasses – *He came and asked for a souvlaki and I gave him one and he ate it.*

David - *...and I ate it!*

Researcher – *Well, I liked it a lot. But, do you know what I would like even more? If that (chair 1) was the shop's counter and this (chair 2) was the chair where the customer would sit while you prepare the souvlaki. Wouldn't that be nicer, both making extra moves showing us...*

David – *Can we do it again?!*

Researcher – *If you want to re-do it like so, yes.*

Girl – *Mr. Miltos, could one of us play two roles while the other...?*

Researcher – *Ah, very good! Kids, kids listen. The girls here asked me something very interesting*

Girl – *We have found something to do with two people but one of us will play two parts.*

(They perform their topic:)

Girl – *We played that we were in a pet shop and I picked that small animal and Anastasia was the owner and the animal.*

Extract 2: Audio recording after the meeting

...I feel that I can safely say that the ones that seem to have some form of difficulty, the moment that they got up on stage they seemed like having second thoughts, like everyone coming on stage for the first time. They acted in a hurry because of that but they were asking for more after that first trial. They were pointing to others on stage, talking with each other more.

In general today I saw clearly which ones have some short of difficulty and which don't. Mostly it's boys that have second thoughts about standing there in front of us, not the girls. At some point, after the first team of boys (David and Blond boy with glasses) many wanted to play and they started complaining that *I* pick only girl's teams.

What I want to conclude on is that with a bit of exhortation and a kind word or the help of their friends, all managed to participate today. And from that point onwards, they were way more relaxed. The whole difficult part was to persuade them and to let them decide. From the moment that decision was taken, everything was moving smoothly. They might need a second push but they wish to get the attention they request, not too much, only what they need, just to see that you are interested in them.

After my positive comments all were acting nicely. I could see them smiling, feeling a bit awkward, having nothing to answer, but they still were happy. They were sitting around, talking but after a while they were asking for more! Positive comments were the reason to open up...